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# A Study of Humanism and Its Place in the Epics of Homer

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A STUDY OF HUMANISM AND  
ITS PLACE IN THE  
EPICS OF HOMER

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of  
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## **LIFE**

**James Norbert Gelson, S.J. was born in Brooklyn, New York on the 29th day of March, 1929.**

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"C'est la Grèce qui nous a fait hommes."

Anten Festugière, O.P.

## CHAPTER I

### THE HUMANISM OF THE PAST

The restless mind of man has always been eager to solve the problems of the world with which it is confronted. Beyond recorded history poets have woven into immortal verse their reaction to the beauty of nature - the sun in its rising and setting, the moon and stars, the roar of the ocean and the quiet of forests. Still, nothing has moved man as deeply as the longings, the joys, the sorrows of his own heart. What does it all mean? Who is he? Whence has he come? Where is he going? Philosophers and scientists have expended reservoirs of energy in analyzing the structure of nature, and have succeeded in plotting the course of celestial bodies. They have come very close to explaining the mysteries of human anatomy, and have also made great inroads in the more difficult regions of man's mind. But for as long as the human mind has had the power of operation, it has reflected on the meaning of man. The studied reflections of thinkers have been proposed to their fellow men, have been rebuked and corrected, and pondered again. Revised versions of

difficult problem, concerning the greatest wonder of earth, have been handed down to fresh minds eager to tackle the same problem. However, through the annals of history in this most "mysterious of all human achievements; the conscious reflection of the self about the self"<sup>1</sup> man has remained, for the most part, a mystery to man. And since he has not solved the problem of himself, many errors have followed in the wake of man's thought. His heart and soul have been tortured with moments of transient joy, his intellect has been frustrated, at times his body is in the ascendency, at times his soul. His imagination has soared to the roof of heaven, and trampled his reason underfoot. In the struggle for the knowledge of his proper place, part of man has been pitted against part. Inevitably, part loses out. If the spirit is favored, the body suffers. If the body is discovered as the whole man, the spirit languishes and dies.

Man has not solved the problem, as the testimony of a disturbed soul proclaims. But most fortunately, and as it should be, this is not the whole history. There have been men who have successfully pondered the mystery of man. Although their answers have been real and practicable, the element of mystery will al-

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<sup>1</sup> Jaime Castiello, A Humane Psychology of Education, New York, 1936, 97.



ways remain. In creation man takes his place as the greatest of wonders, and wonder always implies the notion of mystery. As Chesterton has remarked, we cannot love something until we first see it as strange. However, that has been the difficulty of so many thinkers who have pondered the problem of themselves. They have seen man as strange, but they have not made the transition into the final and perfecting stage of love. As a result of their own warped outlook, such erring philosophers have handed down a diseased and unpalatable food to their admirers. These stagnant conditions can only breed more heresy. Such ideas have left the modern man a monster to posterity, for the simple reason that they have made him other than he is.

But the great men, the enlightened minds, those who have pierced the veil of mystery, have caught a sight of man in his totality. These are the philosophers whose works will always be a leaven to mankind, the literateurs whose prose and poetry will always be a classic expression of the meaning of man. It is their vision that has made them men to be studied. Theirs is not the struggle of a part of man against a part; of body against spirit, or spirit against body.

Matthew Arnold once said, "The aim is to see life

steadily and see it whole."<sup>2</sup> That ought to be the aim of every man. It will only be in proportion as each of us can find his proper place that we can attain to the dignity of our being.

Those who have wrestled with the problem of man, especially in philosophical and literary fields, have called their doctrine humanism. They believe they have solved the riddle of human life, or offered an aid to the solution. But sadly enough, there have been many, many false prophets, and few men with vision. "For every hundred men who can act, there is only one who can think. And for every thousand men who can think, there is only one who can see." We speak of that vision "whose aim is to see life steadily and see it whole." For there is only one human nature and consequently there can be but one humanism. And those who have caught a glimpse of this vision

are the immortal humanists of the past who have fathomed most deeply the human heart (their own, first of all), and translated into human language the thoughts and feelings of mankind. As we hear their voices, their accents of joy and sorrow - the 'still, sad music of humanity' - it seems that we are listening to what is most personal to ourselves; they reveal ourselves to ourselves and make conscious what before was only dimly felt; they teach us to lead richer lives, to see better the world of nature and man, to think better, love

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Irving Babbitt, Literature and the American College, Boston, 1908, 23.

and desire better, to be, in a word, more fully human - humaniores-maxime homines.<sup>3</sup>

There can be but one true humanism. If you are a man, there is only one way of being yourself, being human. Many systems that use the name of humanism are either incorrect or imperfect. We can expunge the errors of the incorrect, though with difficulty, and we can build upon the imperfect, bringing it into its fulfillment.

"We have lost our sense of the place of man in the universe."<sup>4</sup> But let us hope that with the aid of those who have seen man in all his "texture, color, range, and freedom"<sup>5</sup> we may learn something of the dignity and wonder of man, and learn to love more the process that we may call "growing more and more human," which should be the primary interest of every man.

Louis J. A. Mercier has said that the question "raised by humanism is precisely: what is the character of man

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3 Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., "Fac Hoc et Vives," The Classical Bulletin, XVI, March, 1940, 41.

4 Archibald MacLeish, "Humanism and the Belief in Man," The Atlantic Monthly, CLXXIV, November, 1944, 75.

5 Howard F. Lowry, "The Old and the New Humanities," The Classical Journal, XXXVI, January, 1941, 200.

as such, what is the nature of man?"<sup>6</sup> To simplify and unify the many answers given to the question, he has said that these answers may be grouped under four headings. The first answer is that of the Stoics, "Know thyself." It is an optimistic reply, for they believed that man may easily discover the laws binding his nature and conduct, and that once he has found them, virtue follows as a natural consequent. But to the question we also have a pessimistic answer. It is that man has much difficulty in knowing the laws of nature, and when he has discovered them, in executing them.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps it is better to call this a semi-pessimism. For although the difficulty is there for any man, those who respond with the second group have exaggerated the problem. The third position is one of utmost optimism. It holds that man's instincts are by nature so virtuous that he has only to let himself go, and that without any effort he becomes good. For such people man's intellectual capacity to analyze is only a device obfuscating the issue. This is essentially the doctrine of Rousseau. The fourth answer is monistic. The intellect and will of man are seen as not distinct from the "All-One of the universe," which is either wholly spiritual or wholly material.

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<sup>6</sup> Louis J. A. Mercier, The Challenge of Humanism, New York, 1933, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Mercier has considered the first two answers, namely the Stoic motto, and the concept of great difficulty in knowing the laws of nature, as humanistic because they visualize man as distinct from nature, and assign him a special character. Since it is our intent to treat of the definition of humanism further on, we shall let such a statement pass, neither affirming nor contradicting its content. The third opinion, which optimistically believes in the virtuous instincts of man, has been labeled naturalistic. Finally, the denial of any distinction from the "All-One" of the universe, is, obviously, monistic.<sup>8</sup>

These in general seem to be the categories into which the answers to the question, "What is the nature of man?" can be placed. Though today the historian and philosopher classify the advocates and proponents of such doctrines under the heading of humanists, we must remember that the word "humanist" was not used until the time of the Renaissance, and the word "humanism" not until years later.<sup>9</sup>

The spirit of the Renaissance was one of reaction. Petrarch, who was always more interested in his literature than

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8 Ibid., 5.

9 Babbitt, Literature and the American College, 13.

in the study of law, was repulsed by the uncouth Latin of his day. As it was, Latin was already a dead language by his time, and an unfit medium for the expression of the sentiments of fourteenth century Italy. Even in such fields as medicine and astrology the corrupting influence of quackery and dead tradition was strongly felt. Petrarch abominated all the banality and superficiality of the age. He sought a fuller artistic life, a loftier culture, and a higher perfection of literary expression, which became a chief characteristic of the Renaissance. The meeting of Petrarch and Boccaccio in 1350 gave the movement two strong proponents, and was well under way.

The Italian ideal of a great man in the fifteenth and sixteenth century was a uomo universale, a man with many-sided interests which made him truly universal.<sup>10</sup> Since this was the start of the movement called humanism, it is comparatively easy for us to see how superficial a foundation the movement had. Humanism became almost a social grace. Later effects of the "humanistic reaction" had, for the most part, little more perfection than their cause. The pendulum had swung away from the divine element, and man's relation to his Creator, and seems to have been stepped on the purely natural side, or as

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<sup>10</sup> Henry S. Lucas, The Renaissance and the Reformation, New York, 1934, 199-206.

the reactionaries themselves have termed it, on the human side of the sweep. The Renaissance was a protest against the era which placed too much emphasis on the divine, and not enough on the human. The decadent interpretation of medieval theology had imposed a constraint upon the natural faculties of man. Men were interested in giving free reign to their bodies and souls, and so for an exemplar they turned to the ancient classics. Instead of merely learning the language they should have imbibed there some of the wisdom and discipline of an elevated secular culture.<sup>11</sup> The literae divinae in vogue until this intellectual revolt, taught man that he needed God in order to lead a well-ordered life on this earth, and all the more in order to experience his union with God in this life and to merit and expect the face-to-face vision of God in the next. "The purpose of the literae divinae," Mercier remarks, "was to produce a saint. The aim of the literae humaniores was to produce the honnête homme, the cultured gentleman."<sup>12</sup> From their avowed reaction against the divine, we can easily perceive the error and discord that was to follow. In the beginning their direction was to the left, but as time went on the needle of their compass was revolving so

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11 Babbitt, Literature and the American College, 13.

12 Mercier, The Challenge of Humanism, 5.

constantly as hardly to admit of a reading.

In the first part of the Renaissance we have a movement of emancipation - an emancipation of the intellect and senses. These humanists broke the traces of medieval restraint so vehemently that there resulted a total lack of decorum and selection. Men have consciously or unconsciously regretted this mistake ever since. Since those years only a few have had the peaceful vision "to see life steadily and see it whole."

Once the accent was placed on humanity, various concepts rose to answer the question, "What is man?" or "What is the nature of man?" There was much confusion over the Stoic mottoes: "Live conformably to nature," and "Follow nature." Many held that the humanists preached a gospel interpreting this to mean, "Follow all the instincts of nature." Although Rabelais tried to put a Christian interpretation on this philosophy, the words he placed over his monastery door - Fais ce que voudras - have been interpreted as a license to indulge all the instincts of oneself. Actually, Rabelais did believe in the good instincts of human nature, and thus his answer to our fundamental question is an optimistic one. Only the "well born, well instructed, conversing in honest company"<sup>13</sup> were admitted

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 7.



to his cloister. Montaigne, a contemporary of Rabelais and another proponent of false humanism, found great delight in the literae humaniores, but felt that man was too diversified a creature, and too changeable, to be the object of any but a skeptical inquiry. Montaigne realized that without grace and divine knowledge, "which is his sole honor, his strength, and the foundation of his being," man is weak and helpless. Both he and Rabelais tried to keep the old doctrine from the literae divinae and welcome the new, but both fell into the contradictions in the struggle.

Although the contradictions resulting from the conflict of Christian and pagan thought have remained to a great degree for most men unreconciled, the spirit of humanism of itself did not reject the supernatural. It looked to religion for support to effect a happy blend between the ideals of the diverse literae. Men who became Christian humanists in various degrees, Corneille, Racine, Bossuet, Thomas More, Boileau, Fenelon, La Bruyere, attempted to model their thoughts on such meditation. But some men, like Moliere and La Fontaine, were already fallen into the pit of pure naturalism. Descartes' utter trust in reason may well be but an offspring of the confidence of the Stoics who relied so strongly on knowledge. From the skepticism of Montaigne Pascal himself departed from the spirit

of humanism, and ended up with a completely pessimistic outlook. To the question of man's nature Pascal replied, "Be humble, o powerless reason; be silent imbecile nature... Listen to God."<sup>14</sup>

Soon this neo-classicism degenerated and saw its own decline. The literae humaniores became challenged as had the literae divinae, and as they had taken man away from God, so too they had concentrated on man to the exclusion of nature and things. The era of naturalism waxed so that of humanism waned.

Naturalism attributed everything to human nature as a first principle. It is opposed to any supernatural or revealed religion. Natural religion suffices for salvation, and religious life is a life unaided by influences from the supernatural. And so with the tide of naturalism, Christian tradition and the tradition of ancient Greece and Rome were submerged. Under the definition of naturalism have come all the doctrines found in the eighteenth century and handed down to the nineteenth and twentieth century. We see how far the pendulum has swung away from the strong salt of the literae divinae. The latter wanted to make man a saint. The humanists wanted to make him more of a man. Not only did humanist reactionaries fail to see the con-

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 9.

traditions in their revolt, but what a monster they made of man! It may be said that they succeeded in making man nothing but a grotesque caricature of what he should be.

Under the genus of naturalism can deism. Deism rejected all revelation. It still believed in God, in the spirituality and immortality of the soul, the freedom of the will, and "a law for man" and "a law for things" distinct from the law of man. Morality for them was reduced to the will of God. Human reason could discover the moral aspects of life, and was therefore capable of being moral.

This is a natural religion, a religion in which man takes his place free from Providence, Revelation, and miracles. With the persuasions of this doctrine behind him Voltaire attacked the Church, but kept a personal God and an after-life. The only claim of this doctrine to the label of humanism is that human nature remains distinct from the rest of nature because of the spiritual principle immanent in man. Voltaire's doctrine is more properly called Rationalism than Naturalism.

Pantheism which followed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the next aberration from the humanism of the Renaissance. Later, Spinoza, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel

destroyed the human personality, and God became impersonal. In the absorption in the "All-One" all human actions were determined, immortality was destroyed, and obviously there could be no supernatural. What has become of the man the humanists of the Renaissance set out to accentuate? He has surely lost the dignity and respect that was so passionately sought in the break from the traditions of medieval theology. And then, too, materialistic naturalism had its way of answering the mystery of human nature. From Descartes, who held such a dualism of thought and matter that his philosophy led to both a pure idealism on the one hand, and a pure materialism on the other, through Hebbes, Locke, Hume, Condillac, Diderot, La Mettrie, d'Holbach, man's own thought of himself became reduced to that of a machine. Only matter exists. There is no teleology. There is no freedom, responsibility, immortality or personality. The life of this humanism has ended in death.

The Romanticists of the early nineteenth century did little to help the cause of humanism. Rousseau had preached the preference of a land of the imagination to that of reality. Expansive emotion became the trend of the time. And as it did, the dignity of man suffered another blow. Could this be a fitting response to the question, "What is man?" The belle ame, the ame sensible, has taken the place of the honnête

homme.<sup>15</sup> The object of love did not matter to these men. Actually, they were in love with their own emotions. Musset has said, "To love is the great point; what matters the mistress? What matters the flagon provided one has the intoxication?"<sup>16</sup> It was Sainte-Beuve who realized that the method of the nineteenth century was to take some element of human life that is immensely important, but still secondary, and then try to exalt it to the supreme and central place.<sup>17</sup> These Romanticists had a vision, a vision of the importance of a part of man, his life and his surroundings. Hardly did they "see life whole." They exaggerated, twisted and warped man so as to leave him a lonely, tortured non-entity.

The humanists of the Renaissance had believed in the autonomy of man, in human nature through its spiritual element as distinct from the rest of nature, and in a personal God above both man and nature. But they, too, became the victims of over-emphasis, and the literae humaniores were a stepping stone to the intellectual evils that have been recounted. From the Christian middle ages and the Christian humanistic era to the

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15 Ibid., 20.

16 Ibid., 21.

17 Ibid., 39.

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries man had lost a true concept of himself. He was no longer a humanist.

Many of the doctrines proposed in the past five or six centuries have been given the name of humanism either properly or erroneously, but it must be the part of the judicious mind to determine which are properly titled, and which are merely a mockery and counterfeit. It is our purpose to treat briefly of the new humanistic movement that has recently arisen, and to give what we believe to be a definition of true humanism.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MEANING OF HUMANISM

To the first essay of Irving Babbitt's book, Literature and the American College, has been traced the beginning of the movement in American thought which is being called a new Renaissance of humanism.<sup>1</sup> As the author points out, the word humanitas expressed a very elastic concept and virtue for the men of ancient Rome. Aulus Gellius has said that the word is incorrectly used to denote "a promiscuous benevolence, what the Greeks call philanthropy," whereas the significance it really has is that of doctrine and discipline, and applies not to all men, but to a select few.<sup>2</sup> It is an aristocratic term, and not a democratic one.<sup>3</sup> Doctrine and discipline are of its essence. The doctrine to see life whole, and the discipline to fulfill the vision. But without the notion of this doctrine and discipline the word humanitas degenerates into a word with little

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1 Mercier, 17.

2 Gellius xiii. 17.

3 Babbitt, Literature and the American College, 6.

value for intellectual progress. To be sure, the words humane, humanistic, humanitarian, humanitarianism, have great need of clarification in any intelligent conversation today. If we call a man humane, few would not consider our meaning to be equivalent to calling a person kindly benevolent. On the other hand, say that a man is human, and the uninitiated think of weakness. "To err is human." Yet the words are fundamentally of the same origin. Humanitarian and humanitarianism usually connote a profuse philanthropy, especially on the part of one who is at least financially and socially so far removed from the profanum vulgus as to give little care for any particular individual. And we have seen under how many headings a man was classified as a humanist. Now the definitions seem to have strayed from their original meaning! They can all be traced back to homo. What does it mean to be a man? It is precisely this question that the true humanist keeps before him in his attempt to see man in his proper context, and exercise the discipline required by the sight.

Babbitt speaks of the present tendency to regard humanism as an abbreviated form of humanitarianism. He quotes Schiller in his attempt to distinguish between the humanist and the humanitarian. Schiller plays the role of the humanitarian when he would "clasp the millions to his bosom, and bestow a kiss



upon the whole world."<sup>4</sup> As Babbitt remarks, "The humanist is more selective in his caresses." One who offers his mind and heart to be swayed by an equal affection for all the creatures of this earth cannot have the vision of a true humanist. He cannot have the vision for the very simple reason that if he were filled with a clear view of earth's and heaven's panorama he would perceive a hierarchy of the beautiful, and the value that his mind would place on each particular would present a varying degree of motive to the will. Psychologically he would be no stronger than a sapling in the hurricane who would have his affections tossed by every object of love and admiration. By no means is this to say that man, the lord of all this earth, cannot and should not "clasp the millions to his bosom." But it does mean that as man embraces the world about him, he should be conscious of a varying degree in his caresses. The human heart is an organ so magnificent, and yet so delicate, that the slightest distortion destroys its symmetry.

Man, though possessed of an animal nature, remains paule minus ab angelis,<sup>5</sup> and has the intellectual capacity to

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4 Ibid., 7.

5 Psalms, viii. 6.

grade for himself the wonders that surround him. He has the ability and strength to plumb the depths of his own soul, probably the most wonderful of created things, and an image of the Almighty. And when man has perceived the objective beauty of the world about him, and attained a knowledge of his power to assimilate by love these objects, he must strike an harmonious concord between the two. The love of the humanitarian is a flabby thing; it is sympathy without selection. On the other hand, as Babbitt remarks, a selection without sympathy grows disdainful.<sup>6</sup>

Brunetiere, the modern French critic and literateur, believes a complete definition of humanism is had in the celebrated line from Terence: "Humani nihil a me alienum puto."<sup>7</sup> There is a great deal of truth in this, and a great deal of falsehood. But once again the accent of attention must fall on humani. If by human, you were to mean human in its strictest sense, that is, with all the proper discipline and sympathy, with the peaceful balance of values between the man and the

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6 Babbitt, Literature and the American College, 8.

7 Ferdinand Brunetiere, Histoire de la Litterature francaise Classique, cited in Babbitt, Literature and the American College, 8.

beautiful reality surrounding him, you would be expressing a noble sentiment. But if by the word humani you meant any attitude, or action, or sympathy, or love, or sorrow, or distress of any man, you would be leaning more to the side of the humanitarian than the humanist. You would not be preserving a balance befitting man, which is the essence of being human. You would be closely similar to the person who says that it is all the same whether you read the classics or the Sunday supplement. They both deal with the lives of men, therefore the reader acquires as much of the human element from each of them. How far from the truth! From one you will learn something of the breadth, and depth, intensity and importance, of the magnificent experience it is to be a human being. From the other you will skim the surface of the life and love of one particular individual. You will learn little more, if anything at all, of what it means to be a man. You will not become more human.

Babbitt makes an interesting observation on the use of the Anglicized name 'humane letters,' and the Latin literae humaniores. The latter is more correct in that it stresses the element of selection by the use of the comparative "more human."<sup>8</sup> The ethical distinction between the acts of man and human acts

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<sup>8</sup> Babbitt, Literature and the American College, 9.

has an analagous application here. The humanist is not so much concerned with the acts of man as he is with human acts. And here is not necessarily meant those acts performed with a deliberate will, but those acts which find their proper place in accord with the nature of man himself. Thus, owing to the lack of selection and the stress upon an unbridled sympathy for mankind, a humanitarian would find it much easier to sympathize equally with the melancholia of a golfer losing a holiday afternoon game, and with the sorrow of the same man whose son set out for war. While such an example might not do full justice to the humanitarian, still it shows that the latter's sympathy is too dangerously close to being equal in such a case. A humanist might feel sympathy with the man on the golf course, but he would feel an essentially stronger emotion regarding the fact that the man has let something very small upset his soul. It is not human for minutiae to deject the heart of earth's greatest wonder. This is not a peaceful concord between the heart of man and the beautiful reality about him. Of course, there is an essential difference in the sympathy of the humanist for the trivial sorrow and the heart-rending grief of the man. The humanist can distinguish the important from the accidental in the portfolio of values he carries through life.

From his concept of humanism, consisting essentially

of sympathy and selection, Babbitt points out that the ancient Greeks and Romans, and the modern English gentlemen, have placed too much stress on selection to the neglect of the proper element of sympathy.<sup>9</sup> The result is a temperament subject to all the evils of a hierarchy of rank and privilege, of intellectual and social superiority. To such an unhappy end the study of the humanities seems to have led in such countries as England and the United States, primarily perhaps in England. These men retain the name of humanists because the name is chiefly applied to those devoting themselves to the literae humaniores. They have scarcely become humaniores. They themselves have primarily been the cause of their own lack of proportion, and thus have come away from a great school of human nature not as human as they might have. A vast field of so-called humanists being afflicted with a cancerous growth only accentuates the fact that few men have learned the significance and place of a human being. Few men have been able "to see life steadily and see it whole."

As Archibald MacLeish has said, after pointing out the fact that we do not realize any more the place man holds in the universe, "If the world can be taught to believe in the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 12.

worth of man, in the dignity of man, in the 'characteristic perfection' of man, it can be taught not only to survive but to live."<sup>10</sup> And here we have another excellent summary of humanism. "In the worth ... dignity ... and 'characteristic perfection' of man." We must try to exhaust these three notions as much as is possible, humbly admitting that we can never exhaust them fully here on earth where there is always "a wisp of fog between us and the sun."<sup>11</sup> We have to realize first of all what man is before we can set ourselves seriously to the task of becoming more and more human, humaniores, maxime homines.

One of the first questions that man must ask himself while seeking an answer to the original question, "What is man?" is a question something like this: "Men said to themselves on seeing the wonders of this earth: 'This world of ours, this our home, is indeed well furnished. But where, o where is the best?'"<sup>12</sup> Because of the union of soul with body in man he has to start with all the wonders about him before he can realize

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76. 10 MacLeish, "Humanism and the Belief in Man,"

11 Lixette Woodworth Reese, "Tears."

12 Jaime Castiello, S.J., A Humane Psychology of Education, New York, 1936, 213.

his dignity and worth. If man had the power to intuit the mind of God, and realize what His concept of man was, he would know immediately the place of man in the universe. But as it is, man must begin with the thin little blades of rich green grass that can at times fascinate him, and that always buoy him up with a sense of peace and hope. Man must start from the twinkling of stars some of which he is told are millions of light years away, and that the light of some of the closer ones started on its journey long before the wars of Alexander the Great. He must let the thundering, even frightening, roar of an ocean, and the tears that fall from the sparkling eyes of a child, lead him to the knowledge he seeks. Man must permit the buoyant sensation he feels with the coming of a bright and sunny spring day following on the heels of a cold and bleak winter, and the marvelous mystery of the dawn and the setting of the sun each day, and the simple radiance of a lonely violet all contribute to his quest. He must analyze the thrill he feels at the blare of a martial trumpet, the horror and repulsion he experiences at sorrow and sickness bitterly endured, and yet the beauty and peace of a resigned suffering. Man must come to some conclusion why the simple joys of life, a summer evening's walk, a healthy meal, the exhilaration of children at play, a quiet evening with a book, why they all seem to offer us what they have with extended arms. It's all part of being human. They are just a few of the furnishings of our home which make life as a human being such a

wonderful adventure. The spark may die, but it cannot be the fault of the world. The world is always the same. Man himself has let the flames of his being settle and grow cold.

There are beauties within us that the world never sees, but the consciousness of which has always enriched the life of a human being. Who, unless he be married, and deeply in love with his wife, knows of the joys that the bond of marriage brings in the daily drama of life? And who, unless he be a devoted husband or wife, knows of the heart-rending sorrow that death brings? The love of woman has been a goad that has spurred men on to almost unbelievable heights in the face of the greatest difficulties. Many men have looked to a woman with the heart of David Copperfield for whom the beautiful Agnes was always "pointing upward, ... where, in the mystery to come, I might yet love her with a love unknown on earth, and tell her what the strife had been within me when I loved her here."<sup>13</sup> But death has come with its inevitable knock, and the heart of every man has felt the pangs of loneliness which Gerald Vann has so aptly categorized.

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13 Charles Dickens, David Copperfield, Chicago, n.d., 829.



"Loneliness is the stuff of hell."<sup>14</sup> Man, in experiencing such quiet peace and love at one time, and such volcanic eruptions at another, within the same heart and soul, cannot but wonder at himself.

The world's greatest literature has told of the depth of human friendship, in which man has found himself bound by such a strong spiritual bond as is almost beyond all human analysis. Because men have felt this oneness, this love of a fellowman which has made his friend dearer than his own life, many have used the words of Horace expressing his love for Virgil, animae dimidium meae.<sup>15</sup> This union of souls has been beautifully narrated of Jonathan and David. "... the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."<sup>16</sup> Those who have experienced such friendship, similar to Achilles and Patroclus, and Nisus and Euryalus, have considered their friendship one of earth's greatest joys, and have nodded assent to the words of Sacred Scripture: "He that hath found him hath found a treasure... Nothing can be compared

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14 Gerald Vann, O.P., The Heart of Man, New York, 1945, 7.

15 Horace, Carmina 1.3.8.

16 The Book of Kings I, xviii, 1.

to a faithful friend... A faithful friend is the medicine of life and immortality."<sup>17</sup>

One of the beautiful loves of the human heart has been that of a mother and father for their children. Such love is so close to the heart of every creature on this earth, even the most savage of animals, as hardly to need an explanation. Perhaps Evander has well summarized the feeling of all mothers and fathers being separated from their children, when he said of Pallas, "If to live means to see him again, then I pray for life, and I can endure any suffering whatever."<sup>18</sup>

Man has always found earth a home of beauty and splendor, if only he has taken the time and energy to open his eyes. There is delight for the mind, beauty for the eyes, pleasure for the body, a song for the heart, strong driving forces of love and ambition that exhilarate the soul. But here we approach the crossroads which separate the true humanist from the false, and which, a fortiori, separate the humanist from those who have made a complete monster of man, and a mockery of the

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<sup>17</sup> Ecclesiasticus, vi, 14-16.

<sup>18</sup> Vergil, Aeneid viii.576.

term humanism. All the pleasures and perfections in this world, whether taken individually or heaped one upon the other, have never been enough to satisfy the heart of man. Here we have a strong clue, and take a firmer step toward answering our original question, "What is man?" Earth does not hold in its vast treasure the rest that man seeks. He has had tremendous joy, and strong passionate love on his quest; he has experienced loneliness, "the stuff of hell," but has never found the ultimate end of his being here on earth. It is one of earth's strangest paradoxes, if not the strangest, that the most evident truth on the face of the earth, has been the most difficult, it seems, for men to realize, and the most arduous to keep before them once perceived. That truth is that the nature of man does not have its full satisfaction in this world. Man must look higher. He is fully conscious that he is not responsible for his own existence, nor can he give being to another. He must exist through the power of One who has existence of himself, and is communicating a share in it to man. At once the concept of man for the humanist takes on an added coloring. Father Charmot says, "Bref, l'Humanisme est essentiellement une relation de l'univers a l'homme."<sup>19</sup> "... essentially a relation of the

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<sup>19</sup> F. Charmot, S.J. L'Humanisme et L'Humain, Paris, 1934, 15.

universe to man." And God reigns supreme in this universe! In his concept of man, and of knowledge growing toward true humanism, the relation of man to his Creator is a very important one. It must of necessity influence his attitude toward everything he finds upon earth, every physical beauty, every joy and sorrow, and attitude of his own soul. When man has reached this stage in the knowledge of himself, he can say in a most beautiful context with Saint Augustine, fully appreciating at the same time the "furnishings of his home": "Fecisti nos ad Te, Domine, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in Te."<sup>20</sup>

But we have stepped ahead of our limits slightly. At the cross roads, with all the evidence of creation crying out the existence of a supernatural power, and telling of its love for men, many have turned and walked in the wrong direction. With each step they have gotten further and further away from the knowledge of God, and hence from the knowledge of man, and thus have strayed further and further from true humanism. For there is only one nature of man and there can be but one humanism.

Some men have merely exposed themselves to life's

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<sup>20</sup> S. Aurelius Augustinus, Confessionum Libri XIII, aucti cura et studio Josephi Capelle, Turin, 1948, I, I.

beauty, and never bothered to ask a question of themselves. They are hardly worth discussing in the context of humanism. Others have been only partly inquisitive, and as a result, only partly pessimistic. Men like Renan have not carried out their initial investigations, and thus have given the advice that man should be virtuous in case life is not a farce and disillusionment, but also they are to be gay and ironically detached, so if life does have a meaning, they shall not have been entirely mistaken.<sup>21</sup>

But such philosophies are in a sense so half-hearted as to afford very little peace to the earnest seeker after truth. Unfortunately, though, others have done great harm to man's concept of himself, and have diverted many searchers from the path to humanism. Some have identified man with the universe, with the idea of the "All-One." The pantheists have made man a god forever restless, with no complement for a heart and soul terminatively capable of the infinite. The rationalists have destroyed the power of man's senses to supply him with knowledge. They have severed the mind of man from a beautiful reality, as have the idealists. How can they be called humanists when they do not know the beautiful and marvelous things of earth which contribute

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<sup>21</sup> Mercier, The Challenge of Humanism, 47.

so much to the correct fulfilment of man's nature? The deists have taken from man a living relation with his Creator. At best, their concept of man could be imperfect, a hub with one main spoke missing. With relentlessness this initial error has eaten into their system until little dignity or worth remains for man. Naturalism and materialism have completely warped and mangled the nature of man. Without the soul of man what is there beautiful and noble for him? For what can he hope and aspire? Actually, and logically, why does man even bother to expend the energies necessary for survival? The loves and joyous beauties mentioned above can mean nothing to a man stepped in the naturalism and gross materialism of our times. These doctrines show us nothing of the "characteristic perfection" of man, and offer no check for the intellect, will and feelings when they are tempted to excess. Naturalism breeds distorted characters, and not humanists.<sup>22</sup> If a man tries to set up a Cartesian dichotomy between body and soul, chaos results. It's "angelicist homicide."<sup>23</sup> The Puritans are an example of this. The simple pleasures that mean so much to the body and soul of man they scorn by almost denying the corporal side of man. They, too,

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22 Ibid., 33.

23 Walter P. Burke, "True Christian Humanism," The Catholic World, CLVIII, February, 144, 462.

make a wreck of human nature, and never can properly earn the name of humanists. The materialists took the same notion of Descartes concerning the union of body and soul, "an angel in a machine," but they ejected the angel and kept the machine.

Thus it is only the Christian humanist who can fully appreciate the "dignity, worth, and 'characteristic perfection' of man." It is only the Christian who can fully realize the place of man in the universe. "L'humanisme est essentiellement une relation de l'univers a l'homme." The order is very much like the wheel with its hub, and four main spokes: the natural and supernatural relation to God, and the natural and supernatural relation to creatures.<sup>24</sup> Destroy or maim a spoke, or a section of one, and you have ruined the balance. The Christian humanist aims at a complete balance, a perfect coordination. The true humanist aims at a "love of beauty in all its manifestations, the completion of the personality in all its powers, the symmetry or coherence in which that completion is unified."<sup>25</sup> When once man has seen himself in the light of his relation to God, to the created beauty about him, and to the joys and sorrows

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24 Ibid., 460.

25 Gerald Vann, O.P., On Being Human, New York, 1934,

of his own heart, he is in a position to evaluate accordingly the beauties of earth. Each has its proper perfection, characteristic of itself, and each is good in its own way. "In the beginning ... God saw all the things He had made, and they were very good." The humanist can appreciate this. He knows that the loves we spoke about, the love of the sun, moon and stars, the love of the greenness of the grass, the love of man for woman, of man for his friend, of parent for child, of a populace for its country, all have their proper actuality and perfection. To concentrate on one part is to lose a vision of the whole. Perhaps only the saints have enough magnanimity to love every creature with the intensity the creature demands, but the humanist is well started. The humanist is attempting to evaluate and to respond to things as they are, as seen by the eye of God. Gerald Vann, in speaking of the great similarity between Christian and Hellenic humanism, especially concerning the love of created things, can be aptly quoted.

The beauty of creatures is as vivid in the Thomist view as in the Hellenic, for while their beauty is infinitely inferior to the beauty of God, it is in each of them a particular mirroring of an aspect of that absolute beauty, and their multiplicity and diversity is necessary inasmuch as the most perfect mirroring of God's beauty in creatures should be accomplished only by the unified splendor of a manifold creation synthetized into a harmony.<sup>26</sup>

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26 Ibid., 19.



The true humanist will keep the balance of power. It is not true mysticism simply to despise created beauty for the sake of an infinite beauty. It is a pathetic mistake. Because there exists a supernatural good, the natural is not therefore to be despised. It is good, and will always remain so. Helen Waddell summed up Boethius very humanistically, "a lover of life, and unafraid of death, but neither its shadow nor the light of the world to come has taken from the greenness of the grass."<sup>27</sup> Though your love for God is above all things, your love for creatures is a magnificent perfection. Malachy, an old Irish bishop, propagated some humane advice, "spernere mundum, spernere sese, spernere nullum," if correctly interpreted as an ascetical norm urging the proper love for all men and for the entire universe. Humanism is, of course, a love based on knowledge of the world in which man lives. Humanism is to know and to love in the manner befitting man. That, briefly, is our definition of humanism. To be human is to realize that the soul of man, made in the image of Almighty God, is "quoddamode omnia." Men can unite their heart and soul to all of creation. None of the beauty which is an imitation of the divine essence is to be scorned. In speaking of the Greeks, Herschel Baker points out an attitude truly humanistic. "They, who knew so well how to

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27 Quoted in Vann, On Being Human, 63.

enjoy life, and to express their enjoyment in beauty, revered all of life too highly to deny any part of it."<sup>28</sup> When there is a question of love, it seems that there never can be a question of too much. This must be clarified. If our love for an object exceeds the quality and quantity, so to speak, demanded by the object, either because of its contingency or because it is so imperfect, or vitiated by evil, our love is no longer love. Passion, emotion, excitement, blindness of mind, have taken the place of love. The balance has been upset. We become less human. The mind of God is no longer our mind, because when we do not view creatures in their proper place, we cannot love them with proper love. We must try again to see man in his relation to the universe. That is why with the love of the human heart being aright with the universe, Vann asks the question,

Is there any contradiction in believing in the uncreated beauty of God and loving the created beauty of earth? Any incompatibility in seeking the completion of man, and regarding that completion as ultimately supernatural?<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Herschel Baker, The Dignity of Man, Cambridge, Mass., 1947, 105.

<sup>29</sup> Vann, On Being Human, 16.

Here we have the question of asceticism. To many it will seem very strange to hear asceticism called a part, and a necessary part, of the whole scheme of humanism, of the outlook which looks to "free the faculties of men for their fullest exercise and their finest development."<sup>30</sup> The humanist must be an ascetic. The ascetic must be a humanist.

For asceticism is nothing but the negative aspect of a very positive thing, a love and appreciation of all things in terms of their respective degrees of goodness, truth and beauty. Nothing must be scorned for its own sake but only that the individual may order his relation to all reality. The ascetic must withdraw from beauty that does not lead him to God, so that someday with a truly humanistic vision he may enjoy all creatures in God, and God in all creatures.<sup>31</sup>

They must be at one. If they are not, the humanist will never attain the complete coordination and subordination he seeks. The ascetic without the humanist's vision of the whole will be overbalanced. He will neglect various faculties whose development will be an added perfection for him. As all creatures are recipients of God's infinite love, so therefore they are worthy of man's finite love. Humanism is definitely the enemy of every false asceticism and mysticism which despises any experience not concerned exclusively with the supernatural. For, as Saint

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<sup>30</sup> Archibald MacLeish, "Humanism and the Belief in Man," 74.

<sup>31</sup> of. John Pick, "The Inspiration of Hopkins' Poetry," America, LXVIII, Jan. 23, 1943, 437-438.

Thomas has said, the contemplation, and consequent love, of the things which God has made is good, since

this consideration bestows on man a certain likeness to the divine perfection. For it was shown ... that God by knowing Himself beholds all other things in Himself. Since then the Christian faith teaches man chiefly about God, and makes him to know creatures by the light of divine revelation, there results in man a certain likeness to the divine wisdom.<sup>32</sup>

Closer and closer to the fulfilment of his destiny is man's aim, the expansion of soul which brings man nearer to the mind and heart of God. If asceticism starts from love and true appraisal it is good, and in that love and appraisal it partakes of the essence of humanism.

So, psychologically, as man progresses further along the road to the completion of his vision, he must be conscious of strong forces within him. As powers that are cramped and distorted, and never used to the full, only causing an anguish of soul, become slowly focused on their proper object the hope and joy of man increases. All the forces in man are good; they must be properly exercised.<sup>33</sup> The ascetic humanist, or the humanistic ascetic, share the same ideal: "an integral adaptation to the

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32 Gerald Vann, On Being Human, 44.

33 B.W. Maturin, Self-Knowledge and Self-Discipline, London, 1929, 46.

totality of the universe, past and present, material and spiritual; natural, human, and divine."<sup>34</sup> As men they are trying to draw "near and proximate to God's own thought."<sup>35</sup> And since man has great driving forces within him, as conscience and the history of the world tell us, there are times when to achieve the balance man has to lean somewhat to the other side. This is only so that the entire personality can be freed for its fullest development.

While men are going through the long, arduous educative and disciplinary process of becoming humaniores, of trying to see their place in the panorama of the universe, need we remark the ineffable value of having the personality of Jesus Christ, the God-Man, as a model? In a mystery beyond all human comprehension God has become Man. He has shown us in a way we can all understand what the universe about us means for us. He has called God our Father, warmly and really uniting us to all of mankind. He saw all of creation in its detailed, concrete richness. As He speaks we see the attitude of God, and what ours should be, toward "the wealthy, hard patrician, the children in

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166.           34 Castiello, A Humane Psychology of Education,

35 Ibid., 192.

the market place ... to the reaper, the fisherman, the rain and sun, the beauty of the flowers."<sup>36</sup> He has sanctified the family by calling Himself Son. Friendship was never more deep nor more appreciated when He called the apostles friends. He ennobled the beauty of a shepherd and the majesty of a king. As we take the raw stuff of our own personality, and attempt to make it into the integral, well-ordered whole it should be, befitting the "dignity, worth, and characteristic perfection of man," we have as our model the human Christ. As Christians we have a help to becoming more human for which the poor pagan must blindly grope. Christ has thrown light on this universe which has illuminated for us a scale of values according to which we are to build "the high religion of a cleansed and mature personality."<sup>37</sup>

As man progresses on this road there is a definite happiness he acquires in the enlarging of his heart. He begins to realize that the joys of earth are a foretaste of what is to come. It is his own personality that he will take with him into the next world. There he will still be a human being. As he acquires a deeper, intenser, more disciplined love, and more per-

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36 Ibid., 218.

37 Walter Lippman, Preface to Morals, quoted in Mercier, The Challenge of Humanism, 118.

fect virtue according to his ideal,<sup>38</sup> he comes closer to the goal of the humanist. He keeps "the vision of the whole" steadily before him. And his buoyancy and richness of spirit are inspired by the thought that "Paradise is ... the culmination and completion of what is here begun ... To come as near to this ultimate richness even on earth is the aim of the Christian humanist."<sup>39</sup> In the universal spectacle before him the humanist has the next life to comfort him in the tragedy of death and sorrow, and "the touch of eternity to wipe away his tears." It is all a result of seeing the whole.

Many have pondered and meditated at great length upon the mystery of man, and have asked the question, "What is man?" Sadly some have missed the answer completely, and their response has made it all the more difficult for others to arrive at the truth. The material aspect of man has been extolled, and then the spiritual, beyond all proportion. Created objects have been

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38 Herschel Baker summarizes the definition of Aristotle in this matter: "To feel the passions at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue." (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, I, 1095, quoted in Baker, The Dignity of Man, 64.)

39 Vann, On Being Human, 93.

grossly slighted or terribly exaggerated. Some have made the universe an inexplicable maze for man. Many, however, have been able to delve into the mystery of man, and find his proper place. The ancient Greeks had a concept of man that few generations since have been able to recapture. Their humanism, however, lacked the final touches of Jesus Christ with His grace, and enlightenment; it was imperfect. If only men like Homer and Vergil had heard of Christ what aid they would have given the Christian humanists in restoring man's pride in himself.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, we still have much to learn from such men, and from all men, not only the Dantes, and Shakespeares, and Dickensses, but from all who have fathomed "most deeply the human heart (their own first of all)," and have shown us what a magnificent creature man is. We have great need in these days of restoring belief in the worth of man, and the loveliness of creation. We must be taught again that life on this earth is like a cataract of music tumbling to its fulfilment in eternity. We must let the immortal humanists of the past expand and intensify our loves, and deeply enrich our personalities, that we may come to visualize the great mystery of the creation about us, worthy of our finite love, and

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<sup>40</sup> Tradition has recorded for us the imagined apostrophe of Saint Paul at the tomb of Vergil. "Ad Maronius mausoleum ductus fudit superum pie rorem lacrimae. 'Quem te reddidissim,' inquit, 'si tevivum invenissen poetarum maxime!' Quoted in J. Wight Duff, A Literary History of Rome, New York, 1932, 462.



ardently inspiring us to return the infinite love of the Almighty Creator.

Humanism is, then, the vision of man in his relation to all the universe. As we have defined it, humanism is the knowledge and love of all things in a manner befitting man. Since the soul of man has a capacity for the infinite, he must grow in knowledge and love of nature, man, and God if he is to fulfil the ideals of his humanity. The vision of humanism calls man to a richness and possession in love that all too few have attained. The beauties of earth, the minds and hearts of men, and the love of Almighty God are treasures hardly known and too little loved by man. The vision of humanism, "the vision of the whole," bids men to open up their hearts and souls, and live as men were meant to live, to love as men were meant to love. Only as man's personality grows in the possession of all being does he become more and more human. To offer him an ideal personality and manhood as a model Jesus Christ came down from heaven. Lest any overemphasis or destructive affection hinder man from a complete adaptation to reality the norms and practices of asceticism are to act as guides. Though the loves of earth are intense joys, still they are marked with the vein of tears, so that on his journey man may not stop here below but may fulfil the vision of humanism by seeking the highest perfection of all, union with Almighty God. Such is the vision of humanism.

PART II

HUMANISM IN HOMER

## CHAPTER I

### THE RELATION OF MAN TO NATURE

As we step into the world of Homer we notice the difference immediately. Our vision of man becomes clearer. Before we can define the sight, we feel that it is good to be here. For very quickly Homer impresses us with a lively sense of the power and beauty of life. Everything in Homer has an importance that the multitude of men never grasp. We are delighted to hear him speak of the noble man, the swift horses, the rosy-fingered dawn, sweet sleep, the unresting sea, the wide earth, sparkling wine, the good gods, loving friendship, and black death. As the soul of Achilles strode majestically with great strides over the field of asphedel,<sup>1</sup> so too, our soul takes on a renewed energy in the atmosphere of Homer's world.

Homer's vision gives us an understanding of man that we have not seen as yet by ourselves. Unconscious of his magnificent artistry we watch him throw light on the jewel that is man, and constantly see the greatest wonder of earth in a new richness.

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1 Odyssey xi. 539.

The great outlines and small details, the essential notes and the varying personal traits of our common nature are lucidly refulgent in his verse ... because he brings us into such intimate contact with the joys and sorrows, the heights and depths of the universal heart of man, it is impossible that we should not better understand and appreciate our fellows and ourselves.

We never knew the value of a living moment as forcefully as we do once Homer has spoken. And every moment is alive in Homer. "In such a world the wind is always blowing, as the sea is always heaving, the rivers are always rushing, and the tall trees are trembling to their tops."<sup>3</sup> Many men have pointed out that the world of Homer is a child's world. This seems very true. For children have a way of perceiving reality without confusion, and expressing themselves without inhibition and restraint, so that they sooner or later seem to become models or ideals for mature men. The simplest are the wisest. The wisest are the simplest. The wise see things as they are. And in our attempt to define humanism we have kept constantly before us the words of Matthew Arnold, "The aim is to see life clearly and to see it whole." In the vision of Homer we take great steps towards our ideal. Homer has a directness in which he sees in things no more than is actually there. He is not given to deceit, or romanticism, or

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<sup>2</sup> Raymond V. Scheder, S.J., "Homer-Chief Humanist," The Classical Bulletin, XVI, June, 1940, 70.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Van Doren, The Noble Voice, New York, 1946, 4.

sentimentality, but to refreshing reality. He is a child with the intellect of a man.<sup>4</sup> And although, as Livingstone has pictured the Greeks in general, "they stood in the morning of the world, no feet had been before them to brush the dew from its common grass and flowers, and they took possession of it with a fresh delight,"<sup>5</sup> still Homer thrills us with the oldest things in man. They are

the broad interests which healthy men in any age have in common ... eating, drinking, fighting, adventure, marriage, friendship, faithful service, courage, generosity, loyalty, anger, cunning fear, .. the original elements out of which we were made.<sup>6</sup>

In showing us the heights and depths of man, his nature, his make-up and interests, his fundamental uninhibited reactions, Homer opens up a school of humanism. To learn from this school we first investigate the relation of man in the Homeric world to the nature that surrounds him.

To many of the men whose philosophies have been mentioned above, nature or the physical world was an important key in solving the problem "What is man?" Many identified man with

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4 R.W. Livingstone, The Greek Genius and Its Meaning to Us, London, 1924, 90.

5 Ibid., 158.

6 Ibid., 164.

nature, and nature with God, thus destroying a hierarchy of perfection and of the beautiful. Such men did not begin to put nature in its proper place. Others went so far as to deny the existence of a world about them. Such a statement would be completely unintelligible in the Homeric world. Romanticists adored with a passionate love the beauties of earth. They clouded the directness of Homer's simple vision. Still others found nature as an answer to man's spiritual longings, and an end for his being. In the land of The Iliad and The Odyssey a reasonable man would never proclaim deism, asserting that the personal God had no influence on the world of men. In his search man has started with nature in his attempt to understand himself. In leading creatures to their proper end, and in expanding the soul of man, men like Saint Thomas and Saint Ignatius have glorified the being of created beauty, and presented it as an essential step in the perfecting of man.

For Homer, though, as for a child, there are no philosophical disquisitions, no torturing doubts. There is no problem; the view is clear. There is in Homer a "fundamental intuitive truthfulness."<sup>7</sup> Nature is very distinct from man. There

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<sup>7</sup> Robert J. Henle, S.J., "Homer, Grand Against the Ancient Morn," The Classical Bulletin, VII, April, 1931, 52.

is no question of physical beauty and man being made of the same stuff.<sup>8</sup> Homer loves the earth and its marvels, and never tires of recounting its appeal. He wonders, and makes us wonder. Men need more of this wonder, for it is the beginning of love, and the nature of man is that of a lover, not a static thinker. Father Burke has expressed well the idea of wonder in Homer.

This world will never starve for want of wonders, but for want of wonder ... that even the little ordinary things are strange, thrilling, that they are beautiful, tinted with the godlike. I think this is Homer's greatest gift.<sup>9</sup>

The first aspect of the physical world about us that Homer brings home to us are what we may call the simple, ordinary scenes of daily life. In portraying them he shows us how keenly conscious he was of the beautiful in daily life, and gives them such a tender touch that we realize there is more life going on around us than we had thought of previously. In telling us how the Achaeans swarmed onto the plain to enter the fight, we hear that they were "as countless swarms of flies that buzz around a herdsman's homestead in the time of spring when the pails are

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<sup>8</sup> Chapter III will treat the question whether nature in Homer brings men to a knowledge of God.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas J.M. Burke, S.J., "The Appeal of Homer," The Classical Bulletin, XIX, January, 1943, 29.

drenched with milk."<sup>10</sup> Almost the same expression is used in the sixteenth book: "as flies that buzz around the full milk pail in spring when they are brimming with milk."<sup>11</sup> This second time is to show how the warriors flocked around the dead body of the beloved Sarpedon. Two quite distinct scenes bring to our author's mind a very homely simile. Few men would have the keenness of insight, and the delicate warmth to take such notice of a swarm of flies around a milk pail, so as not only to keep it constantly in memory, but further to use such a recollection in describing the actions of a war. How many men who fancy themselves possessors of a love for nature would ever see soldiers whitening with the dust of battle, and recall how "the breezes sport with the chaff upon some goodly threshing floor while men are winnowing, while yellow Ceres blows with the wind ... and the chaff-heaps grow whiter and whiter."<sup>12</sup> Or as Trojans and Achaeans fell upon one another, only a Homer could think of it "as a band of reapers mow swathes of wheat or barley upon a rich man's land, and the sheaves fall thick before them."<sup>13</sup> This is far, far more than a feat of memory. To think of it as such is to lose sight of

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<sup>10</sup> Iliad ii.471. (Quotations from The Iliad are taken from The Iliad of Homer, translated by Samuel Butler, New York, 1898.)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., xvi.641.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., v.499.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., xi.70.



Homer's magnificent sense of beauty in earth's manifold manifestations of it. We may remark here that it matters not whether this phase of Homer's humanism be shown to us by the author himself or by the characters of The Iliad and The Odyssey. What we are interested in is the love of nature which should inspire the reader of Homer to open his soul, and to intensify his own love of the physical beauty surrounding him.

Homer's love of the homely is not extravagant or exaggerated. Nor is it restricted to the farm. If the latter were true we would justly suspect him of having a decidedly limited view of nature. Although we are frequently thrilled with an insight into reality that is likened to some aspect of the farm, for example:

some lazy ass that had many a cudgel broken upon his back ... but still eats the corn ... and the boys beat him ... but cannot hurt him ... still when he has had his fill they at last drive him from the plain;<sup>14</sup>

and as Hector picked up a stone so "a shepherd picks up a ram's fleece;"<sup>15</sup> and that deeply sensitive simile which requires a passionate sympathy with nature, and which describes how Menelaus

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14 Ibid., xi.558.

15 Ibid., xii.451.

stooped over the dead body of Patroclus; "as a cow stands lowing over her first calf;"<sup>16</sup> still Homer's soul responded just as melodiously to the rest of the world's pictures. That last simile would in itself be sufficient to indicate to a thinking man that the soul which produced The Iliad and The Odyssey must have many lessons of love to offer to his fellowman. The comparison of affection between a man for his dead comrade, and a cow for its calf, is a bold one. But if we can realize the analogous plains of love that are the order of the love of man, and the love of the animal kingdom, which Homer clearly perceived, and react to them in the intense yet analogous way that Homer does, we will have a greater perception and appreciation of his regard for the kingdom of the brute animal and the inanimate.

The awesome power of the loud-sounding sea and the blast of the mighty winds are subjects recounted again and again in the Homeric epics. We read often of the waves breaking unceasingly upon some shore. "... when the waves run high before the blast of the south wind and break on some lofty headland, dashing against it and buffeting it without ceasing;"<sup>17</sup> "... the

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16 Ibid., xvii.41.

17 Ibid., ii.394.

rising west wind furs the face of the sea and the waters grow dark beneath it;"<sup>18</sup> and "the shrill winds that whistle upon a day when dust lies deep on the roads, and the gusts raise it into a thick cloud."<sup>19</sup> The sea is always causing trouble in Homer. The fundamental epithet applied to it is turbulent energy, "the un-resting sea."<sup>20</sup> When the anger of Poseidon has been aroused there is hardly an affliction more trying for the unfortunate sailor. "Many were the woes he suffered upon the sea"<sup>21</sup> before Odysseus finally reached home. A typical one tossed him shortly after leaving Calypso's isle. Poseidon

gathered the clouds, and seizing his trident in his hands troubled the sea, and roused all blasts of all manner of winds, and hid with clouds land and sea alike; and night rushed down from heaven. Together the east wind and the south wind dashed and the fierce blowing west wind and the north wind.<sup>22</sup>

Waves are like mountains in Homer, and truly the power of heaven is necessary to quiet such irresistible force. "For a god made smooth the cavernous sea."<sup>23</sup> The men of Homer's world showed

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18 Ibid., viii.63.

19 Ibid., xiii.337.

20 Odyssey ii.370. (All quotations from The Odyssey are taken from The Odyssey, translated by A.T. Murray, 2 Vols., New York, 1924.)

21 Ibid., i.41.

22 Ibid., v.292.

23 Ibid., iii.158.

great fright at the forces of nature, and at the same time possessed a balanced appreciation such as harmonized their fear and their respect in a dignified, expansive manner. This was reality to Homer, and as such was not to be either exaggerated or under-rated. There was a definite union between the being of Homer and the pulse of nature, which is observed even in moments of danger. Mention should also be made here of nature's more definite tragedies. Besides the sea and the winds, constant backgrounds for the drama of human life, we have mention of an earthquake and an avalanche. The earth groaned.<sup>24</sup> The rock "came thundering down some mountain ... it sets the whole forest in an uproar; it serves neither to the right nor to the left till it reaches level ground, but then for all its fury it can go no further."<sup>25</sup> Nature to Homer may be, at times, fierce and forceful, powerful and awesome, but it is always real, and in so much as it is so, has its own definite appeal and beauty. Homer missed very little of it, and his vision seems obviously to be "a vision of the whole."

There has been noted the resemblance, possibly the identification, between the simple and the wise, between childlikeness and a truly rich, mature soul. Their gaze is clear,

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24 Iliad 11.782.

25 Ibid., xiii.137.

and their heart responsive. To Homer, an Ajax in the battalion of deep souls, the sun and stars have a certain childlike attraction. The most amateur student of The Iliad and The Odyssey will tell you from memory how so many Homeric days begin with the line: "As soon as the early rosy-fingered dawn appeared."<sup>26</sup> This is the sun which "leaving the beautiful sea sprang up into heaven to give light to the immortals and to mortal men on earth."<sup>27</sup> This is not to say that only Homer knows the beauty of the sun and its appeal to men. Many poets use the rising and the setting of the sun as illustrations of life and death for man. We constantly hear the warmth of the sun being denied as the equal of a lover's heart for his beloved. Even for the most common man there is joy in the sunrise, or in the fading scarlet beams of evening. But Homer highlights these commonplace, if they may be so termed. He adds a note, or rather points out an aspect of charm that we, of ourselves, usually do not see. He tells us to see the "rosy-fingers" of the dawn, and until he has spoken we have not noticed them. If we watch closely we now see the sun spring up eager to give mortal man light for another day. Homer is wonderful, and the amazing part about him is that he is real. We look again at realities with which we have been

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26 Odyssey 11.1., 111.404.

27 Ibid., 111.1.

familiar all our days, and see for ourselves in them a deeper vision than we had known before. Homer has caught the pulse of nature, and is communicating his love for it.

As often as Dawn leaves her high couch beside Tithonus, so often of necessity does the time come when we hear the bard sing, "Now the sun set and all the ways grew dark."<sup>28</sup> There comes to every aspect of the beauty of nature that mortal tinge which proves the limitations of beauty's perfection in it, but which if properly perceived only strengthens our grasp of it. Such was Homer's delight in the rays of the sun.

But in all her cycles nature has some beauty to offer a mortal or immortal heart. When the ways of earth do grow dark, we have a special species of brilliance to charm us, the stars. Homer must have loved the stars for he reserves expression of them for his most delicate moments. He never throws the joys of nature about with reckless abandon, and this seems especially true of the stars. The first example of such a nature that probably occurs to every reader of Homer is the touching scene at the Scaean gates in The Iliad. While Hector bids his wife goodbye, their child, Astyanax, nestles against the bosom of his

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28 Ibid., 11.398.

nurse, "like a beautiful star."<sup>29</sup> That is all that Homer need say, and the simplicity of the picture warms us thoroughly. We would not have said it that way for the reason that we do not have such a fundamental grasp on nature's secrets that we are apt to make such comparisons.

The Trojans had retired from the battle to spend a restful night by their tents, and all over the plain could be seen the flickering of their thousand fires. We catch the spirit of peaceful repose when Homer says the campfires were "like stars that can all of them be told and the heart of the shepherd is glad."<sup>30</sup> Never much elaboration when mention is made of the stars because their attractiveness is so simple that cumbersome phrases only render the reader's vision more complex. An interesting note is that the star itself is not described but rather its reaction on the shepherd. The same is true of Homer's manifestation of Helen's loveliness.<sup>31</sup> Diomedes' shield sparkled, but not gaudily, rather it was "like the star that shines most brilliantly in summer after its bath in the waters of Oceanus."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Iliad vi.401. Confer also Wordsworth's "Fair as a star, when only one is shining in the sky." (Francis T. Palgrave, The Golden Treasury, Chicago, 1908, 258.)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., viii.559.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., iii.158.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., v.5.

Homer has said enough of the stars. We realize the attraction they had for him.

All the Greek world loved physical power. The statues of Apollo of the Belvedere and The Discobolus are present day testimonials. Homer, and the men of The Iliad and The Odyssey were no exceptions. The most apparent clue to such a regard is seen in the Homeric similes applying the likeness of wild beasts to many of the warriors. Once again we have an accuracy of description that brings a known but obscure reality into clear focus. We hear of how "a dun eagle swoops down upon a flock of wild fowl feeding near a river;"<sup>33</sup> or how Menelaus accuses the suitors of lying in another man's bed, "as in the thicket-lair of a mighty lion a hind has laid to sleep her new born suckling fawns, and roams over the mountain slopes ... then the lion comes to the lair and lets loose a cruel doom;"<sup>34</sup> the hands of Automedon were "bloody, as a lion that hath devoured a bull;"<sup>35</sup> "as ravening wolves seize on kids or lambs, fastening on them when they are alone on the hillside;"<sup>36</sup> "he came on like some lion of the

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33 Ibid., xv.690.

34 Odyssey iv.335.

35 Van Doren, The Noble Voice, 11.

36 Iliad xvi.352.



wilderness, who has long been famished for want of meat and will dare to break into a well-fenced house to get at the sheep;"<sup>37</sup> "as a dog springs upon a fawn which a hunter has hit."<sup>38</sup> In all of these, as in the countless other similes, Homer shows a detailed richness of description, and an accuracy that is clear and refreshing.<sup>39</sup> The descriptions are easily read, and one need not linger, rather the swiftness and force naturally carries the reader hurriedly on with the violent action.

Besides the detailed concern with the resemblance of men on the plain of war to beasts in the forests, Homer shows a great love for domestic animals, especially horses. He revels in thinking of their great power, their swiftness, their stateliness and beauty. Mark Van Doren has caught something of Homer's special love for horses:

...the horses most proud of their capacity to move, most conscious of their necks, their manes, their rippling tails--these share with swarms of men the secret of Homer's life, uttered for them in many a gigantic simile.<sup>40</sup>

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37 Ibid., xiii.299.

38 Ibid., xv.579.

39 Raymond Victor Schoder, S.J., The Sources of Homer's Appeal, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois, 1940, 186-188.

40 Van Doren, The Noble Voice, 4.

We see his smile in telling us that horses were "fleet as birds, and they were of the same age and color, and perfectly matched in height."<sup>41</sup> Warriors dashing to the battle are frequently like horses that are stabled and full-fed breaking loose from their harness. A most vigorous, and typical, expression of the horses' charm is had in the dash of Paris to the battlefield when upbraided by Hector.

as a horse, stabled and full-fed, breaks loose and gallops gloriously over the plain to the place where he is wont to bathe in the fair flowing river--he holds his head high and his mane streams upon his shoulders as he exults in his strength and flies like the wind to the haunts and feeding ground of the mares.<sup>42</sup>

The great horses, the immortal steeds of Achilles, would not fight when Patroclus fell, but "a pillar set over the tomb of some dead man ... they bowed their heads ... and hot tears fell from their eyes."<sup>43</sup>

We have not mentioned the pathos of the meeting after twenty years between Odysseus and Argos, his faithful hound. Once the swiftest hunting dog in Achaea, he had been neglected,

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<sup>41</sup> Iliad 11.764.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., vi.506.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., xvii.434.

and left to die in a dung heap. Though no one else had recognized his master, Argos had. He wagged his tail and dropped both ears, but could not move closer to his master. A tear fell from Odysseus' eye. "But as for Argos, the fate of black death seized him straightway when he had seen Odysseus in the twentieth year."<sup>44</sup>

The most touching of nature's glories fill the pages of Homer. An expression that few forget is the beautifully sad description of Gorgythion in the eighth book of The Iliad. "And now he bowed his head as a garden poppy in full bloom when it is weighed down by showers in the spring."<sup>45</sup> The same expression is one of Vergil's most famous similes.<sup>46</sup> But, as has been noted, all of Homer's appeals are rich and varied. A delightful touch is the comparison of the Myrmidons flocking from their ships, to the wasps stirred from their nests by children: "like wasps whose nests are by the roadside, and whom silly children love to tease, whereon any one who happens to be passing may get stung."<sup>47</sup> Homer's soul has let its energies and driving forces

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44 Odyssey xvii.326.

45 Iliad viii.306.

46 Aeneid ix.435.

47 Iliad xvi.259.

see the beautiful in all of nature's myriad forms, and his child-like heart never wearies in recounting his loves again and again. There is not space here to narrate all of the nature portrayed with such remarkable intuition as fills the Homeric epics.

We have heard Homer tell of the "loud-sounding sea," "the unwearying sun," "the rosy-fingered dawn," "the wide earth," and "the sea, the playground of the fishes." He has told us of Calypso's cave, upon which "even an immortal might gaze and marvel, and delight his soul."<sup>48</sup> We have learned that he is ever willing to tell us that the earth is the giver of grain, and that many heroes come from horse-pasturing Argos. Warriors have been likened to the agile, ferociously strong beasts. The physical beauty of men and women is a special marvel. Achilles always takes great strides; Agamemnon is taller by a head than any other; Nausicaa is like to Artemis. Wine is always sparkling, and the feast is always a great joy. "This seems to my mind the fairest thing there is."<sup>49</sup> All reality and all beauty in nature is something definite to Homer. His sense of beauty, and hence his love, is not absorbed in wild abstractions or empty ecstasies.

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<sup>48</sup> Odyssey v.60.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., ix.11.

Rather, it is concentrated on its object as on an individual. Boutray has well pointed out that the Greeks were truly realistic. Beauty exists in things. What he says of the Greeks is all the more true about Homer.

The Greeks were the first to discover that beauty is the most determinate thing in the world; that one may seek it in vain, after the fashion of Oriental art, in the enormous, the indefinite, and the monstrous (with which our aesthetic depravity tends to confound it); it is made of order, measure, adjustment.<sup>50</sup>

And in the Homeric school of humanism we have the proper selectivity. There is a hierarchy of love even among his affections for the objects of nature. The simple, the intense, the sad, the provocative, the powerful all have their place. Monstrosity has no place in the human heart and thus has no place in the lessons of humanism which Homer is teaching.

The Greeks hated all monsters. The quaint phrase in The Odyssey about the Queen of the Laestrygones-- 'She was tall as a mountain, and they hated her!-- would have seem to them most reasonable.<sup>51</sup>

Homer's love is intense, but always proper. Perhaps proof of this can only come from personal experience. From the

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<sup>50</sup> Quoted in The Classical Bulletin, VII, April, 1931, 51.

<sup>51</sup> Arthur Quiller-Couch, On the Art of Reading, Putnam Sons, 1920, 136.

example of Homer, and in our pursuit of the ideal of true humanism, of becoming more truly human--maxime homines--we have much to learn in the love of the beautiful world about us from him "who possessed the finest sense of beauty of any that the world has seen."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Tozer, Lectures on the Geography of Greece, 174  
quoted in Walter Woodburn Hyde, "The Ancient Appreciation of  
Mountain Scenery," The Classical Journal, XI, November, 1915, 73.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RELATION OF MAN TO OTHER MEN

R.W. Livingstone has interpreted with succinet clarity the Greek view of life, their genius and humanism.

You are a man; be a man. Men is being with many faculties; they are there to be developed, and if you will be a perfect man, use them all ... do not ignore human nature ... give it play, yet such play that while no side of it is undeveloped, no side of it tyrannizes over, dwarfs, or interferes with the rest.<sup>1</sup>

Precisely to what extent Mr. Livingstone has penetrated the Greek view of life, and with what breadth and understanding he has seen this life in his own heart, we do not know. What he has expressed, however, is a true summary of humanism.

Although man is a definite being, having a unique and determined nature, yet, as Aristotle pointed out, man's soul can become quoddammodo omnia. Therefore, in order to describe the

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<sup>1</sup> Livingstone, The Greek Genius and Its Meaning to Us, 168.

nature of man in its fullness you must describe his relation to all reality, for in some way he can become all reality. If you desire to be a man, you must, as it were, let your soul guide itself to the waters for which it thirsts--all reality. This union with reality is love. From man's very nature the oneness of such a union is possible. If with the brightness of high-noon we could see this life in its entirety, we would ecstatically give the reins to our soul, and no potency of our being would be neglected. We would be men.

The ideal of humanism has a poignant message for every man. High on the mountain tops it beckons us to approach and possess all. Why can we possess all? For the very simple reason that our soul is made in the image of the Creator, infinite in its capacity for reality. The thoughts and loves of God can in some way be ours. That is why the vision of humanism is so precious. We can possess all. We can love all. Those saints who have arrived at very close union with God can put their hearts against all reality, and react within their own souls in a manner very similar to that of the Infinite God. In as much as we partake of the vision, we partake of the happiness of God.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Paul De Jaegher, S.J., The Lord Is My Joy, Westminster, Maryland, 1949, 16.



Yet there is an element of sadness in our conspectus.

We see clearly that of which we are capable, and we too easily perceive the distance between the possible goal and our actual attainment. We have not possessed in a manner suitable to man, and which perfects him. Therefore, in as far as our limitation extends we are not humanists.

For if there be any realm of reality, any part of the university of being, whose beauty finds no echo in the heart of a man, if there be anything of life and its fulness to which his personality will not respond, that man is, in that degree, no humanist.<sup>3</sup>

The means required to travel the distance between present accomplishment and ideal attainment is not the object of the present study. Such a subject must needs be treated with regard for the emotions, inhibitions, environment, biases, prejudices, and convictions that go to make up an individual personality. Here we are content to point out that our heart is capable of more than we envisage even in our most romantic dreams. We desire to stress the fact that the soul with which we love God is the same as that with which we love man, that our capacity for love throughout eternity we will have determined here on earth. "For how can he who does not love his brother, whom he sees, love

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3 Vann, On Being Human, 27.

God, whom he does not see?"<sup>4</sup> If our soul can be attuned to all reality now in a manner that is demanded by the objective value of existing things, we will not only possess a richer inner life here in time, but will take with us into eternity a personality closer to the ideal by which we were created, a soul similar to God's.

The clearer our vision of the whole becomes the more important do some values appear. One of the greatest faculties of a human being is his ability to love another human being. In great love this union of two souls is so strong as to defy any idea of separation. As mentioned above, examples from literature and history such as Jonathan and David, David Copperfield's love for Agnes, Nisus and Euryalus, and many others, have proved this fact. The higher we go in the scale of intense union of which we are capable the more precious does this union become. And in as far as we fall short of the abilities within us, so much the more regrettable is our failure. Such is, in a brief word, the power of our soul to love man. For men without a great love of God, but who have fathomed some of the depths of human love, this love has been their most precious possession, the noblest

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4 1 John 4, 20.

part of themselves.<sup>5</sup> As Archbishop Goodier points out, love is almost beyond the definitions of philosophers.

The word is the greatest and deepest that any human tongue has ever invented... Men and women have lived for it and died for it by millions; upon it man builds up this existence, and God Himself has built eternity; it is the key to this life, the content of the next, the abiding link between both.<sup>6</sup>

Every man has the spark, but the flames are what count. "For the germ of love is in every human heart; the pity of it is that in some it is nipped and frost-bitten before it has had time to come to maturity."<sup>7</sup> This pity cannot be dismissed in a few words. Love means too much to the being of man. The pity of failure, an awful tragedy, must be measured by each man in so far as he feels the tumultuous agony of desiring to possess all, and becomes keenly conscious of the comparative weakness of the union of love within himself.

Love, and the love of man, is so close to the eternal activity of God as to be almost breath-taking. God possesses all. Man can possess all. He has his own being. The love of another man gives him possession of his friend's being. With

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5 Confer Horace's "animae dimidium meae," (Carmina 1.3.8.)

6 Alban Goodier, S.J., The School of Love, 6th ed., London, 1919, 138.

7 Ibid., 148.

this intense love, which far too few souls have experienced, man comes closer to his ideal, that of the humanist--to be more fully human.

Human love occupies so lofty a place in the possibilities of man, and the ideals of the humanist, that its merits and treasures cannot be briefly narrated. With it man has never felt life useless no matter what his misfortune. Without it the merriest palace is bleak. But in revealing some of the weighty lessons in the school of Homeric humanism, let it suffice to give a few insights into that love of man for man which fills The Iliad and The Odyssey, and inspires us to more intense love in our own life.

One of the first thoughts that will strike the reader of Homer is the idea of hospitality and guest-friendship that is so ingrained in the make-up of the people of Homer's lands. This fundamental attitude is a key to understanding the more intense affections which more truly merit the term love.<sup>8</sup> To these men and women man had a dignity that has been destroyed in our mechanistic age. That is one of the reasons that prompted

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<sup>8</sup> Alfred P. Dorjahn, "Friendship, Hospitality, Gratitude in Ancient Life," The Classical Bulletin, XVIII, January, 1942, 25.

Archibald MacLeish to say, "It is necessary to believe in man as the Greeks believed in man, out of pride."<sup>9</sup> The Greeks respected every stranger. In fact, rarely did they inquire as to their guest's name until first they had wine and dined him, and even at times given him a night's rest. Even when the youth Telemachus was upset by so many sufferings in the absence of his father and the excess of the suitors, in a time when a newcomer was usually in search of his heritage, Telemachus received Pallas Athene, disguised as Mentos, with the words, "Hail, stranger! In our house thou shalt find entertainment, and then, when thou has tasted food, thou shalt tell of what thou hast need."<sup>10</sup> Telemachus himself received a similar welcome when he and Pallas Athene interrupted Nestor's banquet.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the most tender example of receiving a guest is the reception of Odysseus by his faithful swineherd, Eumaeus. The latter with a marvelously simple charm drives his dogs from Odysseus with stones, and tells that he suffers enough woes without his dogs tearing a stranger to pieces. He bids Odysseus follow, telling him that once Odysseus has gladdened his heart with food and wine he may re-

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9 MacLeish, "Humanism and the Belief in Man," 76.

10 Odyssey 1.123.

11 Ibid., 111.34.

count to Eumaeus his own woes. Eumaeus declares the motive for his action. "For from Zeus are all strangers and beggars, and a gift, though small is welcome from such as we."<sup>12</sup> When Menelaus was speeding Telemachus on his way home after a wearying journey in search of news of his father, the great warrior of the Greeks unconsciously gives to posterity wise advice. "'Tis equal wrong if a man speed on a guest who is loath to go, and if he keep back one that is eager to be gone."<sup>13</sup> This attitude is found in the young and old, in the men as well as the women, as may be seen in the tenderness of Helen to Telemachus,<sup>14</sup> and of Nausicaa to Odysseus.<sup>15</sup> This is some of the warmth that pervades the dealings of men with men in The Iliad and The Odyssey. It is more than a polite social grace which does little to cheer the heart. Homer had a special love for the being of man, and in some way all of his characters, no matter what their personality, allow their respect and sympathy, in its original meaning, to well to the surface. "The gentle virtues of hospitality and friendship appear in beautiful ways in The Odyssey ... There is the homely sweetness of ordinary human relations."<sup>16</sup> The word for guest-

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12 Ibid., xiv.57.

13 Ibid., xv.72.

14 Ibid., 125.

15 Ibid., vi.191.

16 Grace H. Macurdy, The Quality of Mercy, New Haven, 1940, 40.

friendship appears over one hundred times in the books of The Odyssey. There remains to be seen how this "homely sweetness" deepened into some of the strongest love in the literature of the world.

A love that frequently does not seem to be given its due place in the annals of human affection is the love of father and son. Marital love, friendship, and the love between mother and child are more widely sung. When we do hear of a great and tender bond between father and son it is characteristically quiet and strong. Joseph Auslander once wrote that such love is usually silent until death churns the ocean of a broken heart. Such is the love in Homer. You would notice it, but would pass it by rather quickly, if you did not have some understanding of what lay below the surface.

Old garrulous Nestor usually talks too much. He has become the exemplar of a "laudator temporis acti." Youths like Telemachus, even with all their respect for him, would prefer to bypass his house rather than be kept there through the night. However, when the reader has understood the troubles this noble spirit experienced before and during the great war, he has an insight and sympathy for Nestor's summary to Telemachus in the

third book of The Odyssey. He tells the youngster how all the best were slain. In battle Ajax fell, Achilles fell, as did Patroclus. "And there my own dear son, strong alike and peerless Antilochus, pre-eminent in speed of foot and as a warrior, lies."<sup>17</sup> Through his tears the grand old man briefly made mention of his dear son in recounting the Argives' woes. We would not have appreciated a lengthy and detailed description.

Telemachus knew of his father merely by report as he was a mere child when the Greeks sailed for Troy. But the fame and renown of his father drove him to anxious longing for his return, and to risk his life in seeking news of his return. Odysseus, on the other hand, knew Telemachus only as a child. On his ten year journey homeward, desiring to see his wife and son, and country, a strong hope and disturbing worry filled the mind of Telemachus. Would he be a manly warrior? Would he be handsome and devoted? Would he be able to take a place among men equal to that of his father? The longing of their hearts was answered in their tearful embrace once Odysseus had revealed himself.

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17 Odyssey 111.111.



Telemachus, flinging his arms about his noble father, wept and shed tears, and in the hearts of both arose a longing for lamentation ... and now would the light of the sun have gone down upon their weeping...<sup>18</sup>

Again there is no elaboration, but the spectator needs none to understand the situation.

Odysseus was still playing the role of a disguised beggar when he inquired about his own mother and father from Eumaeus. "Laertes lives but terribly does he grieve for his son that is gone."<sup>19</sup> This grief is apparent in the haggard old man in the garden. At the sight of his father's misery, Odysseus "nursed his sorrow"<sup>20</sup> but would not relinquish his deceit. Marvelously does he call his father a king even in his sorrow. At the mention of Odysseus and his troubles, "a dark cloud of grief enwrapped Laertes, and with both his hands he took the dark dust and strewed it over his grey head with ceaseless groaning."<sup>21</sup> These are the emotions of those men who have long been famous for their love of the exactly proportionate, and their hatred of excess. For them such violent reactions were rare, but not out

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18 Ibid., xvi.213.

19 Ibid., xv.353.

20 Ibid., xxiv.232.

21 Ibid., 315.

of measure in comparison with the volcanic stirrings of their truly human hearts.

The action of The Iliad is tragic. Thus it is not surprising that death should so often reveal the wounds of the heart. Harpalion, son of King Pylaemones, went to Troy to fight along with his father. But when an arrow took away his life, they took him sadly back to Troy on his chariot. "His father went also with him weeping bitterly, but there was no ransom that could bring his dead son to life again."<sup>22</sup> When Juno was telling the other gods and goddesses to make the best of any ills that Zeus may happen to send them, she chooses the grief of Ares for special attention. His son had fallen in battle, and care lay heavy upon his soul. "... his son Ascalaphus has fallen in battle--the man whom of all others he loved most dearly and whose father he owns himself to be."<sup>23</sup> First is mentioned his love, and then his pride--a human touch.

Not to be overlooked is the paternal love of the two great heroes of the poem, Achilles and Hector. The latter will long be remembered for his part in the scene at the Scaean gates.

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22 Iliad xiii.658.

23 Ibid., xv.112.

Andromache will be mentioned later, but here we picture Hector tossing his little son in his hands, once the baby has gotten over his fright at his father's waving plume. Departing for battle this was Hector's farewell prayer: that the child may be as himself, chief among the Trojans, that he may have strength, and rule with might. "Then may one say of him as he comes home from battle, 'the son is far better than the father,' ... and let his mother's heart be glad."<sup>24</sup> Hector is one of the warmest warriors to grace the pages of literature.

The invigorating charge of love is shown in the dead Achilles' reaction to news of his son given him by Odysseus. Achilles has long been a sorrowing shade preferring life on earth as a hireling rather than to be lord over all the dead. Odysseus tells him that few surpassed Neoptolemus in war. "And the spirit of the son of Aeacus departed with long strides over the field of asphodel, joyful in that I said his son was pre-eminent."<sup>25</sup>

These revelations of paternal love are usually swift and deft, losing none of the power and depth of the reality, or

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24 Ibid., vi.479.

25 Odyssey xi.538.

rather, capturing as much as possible. How could we better capture the joy of old Laertes who suddenly after twenty years of sorrow, has his life changed in the return of his son. The old man is bustling with joy when he sees Odysseus and Telemachus in battle. "My son and my son's son are vying with one another in battle."<sup>26</sup>

Though the touches of paternal love are quick, perhaps those of a mother's devotion are even more swift. If any great love tends to resent public avowal, Homer seems to leave the profundity of a mother's love to the understanding of the reader. In the order of affection it is, perhaps, the most known element, defying description. But, for the reader opening his heart in the school of Homeric humanism, there are flashing glimpses of what a mother's love meant to Homer.

Achilles, that high-spirited and stubborn boy, wept because Briseis had been taken from him. He cried for his goddess mother, the beautiful Venus. She came, and in the midst of his tears, caressed the great warrior of Pythia, "My son, why are weeping? ... Keep it not from me."<sup>27</sup> And when another goddess

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26 Ibid., xxiv.515.

27 Iliad 1.362.

had come from heaven to deflect an arrow aimed at one of her heroes, the mind of Homer turns to the image of a mother and child. "She turned it from his skin as a mother whisks a fly from off her child when it is sleeping softly."<sup>28</sup> And when Patroclus returns to Achilles with news of great casualties in the Argive ranks, Achilles asks why he is "weeping like some silly child that comes running to her mother and begs to be taken up and carried."<sup>29</sup> When Odysseus went to Hades he did not know that his mother would be there. At sight of her he wept, but even for his great sorrow, he could not let her approach until he had consulted Teiresias. His mother, Anticleia, tells him first of his wife, his son, and his father. Only then does she mention what misfortune befell her. "Longing for thee ... has robbed me of honey-sweet life."<sup>30</sup> Would any loving mother do otherwise? Would such an action need explanation? Homer says little on the subject, but from his very reticence we catch a glimpse of the passion and pathos involved in the mysterious giving and sustaining of life on this mortal earth.

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28 Ibid., iv.130

29 Ibid., xvi.7.

30 Odyssey xi.202.

There lies within the human being a potency to a special form of the union of love. Love, therefore strong love all the more, demands a union. The concept of union implies a force which compels two things to be one. That this reality of unity may result the two beings must be as equal as possible. Such is the love of friendship. Archbishop Goodier elaborates this idea of equality. "No matter our respective gifts of nature and of grace, it must all be the same between him and me."<sup>31</sup> This capability of union in the highest form of friendship has been narrated in the world's history and literature. Ecclesiasticus says, "A friend shall be to thee as thyself."<sup>32</sup> This bond is expressed in many ways: "an image of thyself;" "the other half to one's soul." Dryden has claimed, "I was his soul, he lived not but in me." Diogenes says friendship is "one soul in two bodies." Shakespeare says, "two seeming bodies, but one heart."<sup>33</sup> There is such a mystery in the intensity of this love that anything hindering union such as the prevalent idea of self, the materiality of a hampered soul, the self-seeking grasp of

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31 Goodier, The School of Love, 80.

32 Ecclesiasticus 6,2.

33 See Francis Cassilly. The Story of Love, 2nd ed., Saint Louis, 1918, 8. Confer also Aristotle's definition of a friend,

desire all either diminish or destroy friendship. Since the love of two friends implies an emptying of self, it is not the least bit surprising that our minds should liken it to the immateriality of an angelic nature. "The next to angel's love, if not the same."<sup>34</sup> In the substance of an angel we best find a concept that will explain a complete union. The materiality of earth always implies a limitation. Desire to have your friend, and there will always be a duality--you seeking and your friend. Desire to be him, and your life will be so perfectly swallowed up in him that there will be no differences between you. All will be the same. In the deepest meaning of love you will be him. Being is the most perfect possession, and the highest of all perfections. In so far as you are your friend you will possess him completely. Since you have emptied yourself of any hindrance to union, of any grasping for your loved one, your soul will always be capable of this union with God and with all reality. There is no contradiction in being your friend to the last ounce of his being, the greatest love, and of being one with God in a union of love. Only material bodies, which imply an obstacle to union, must have a relation to one being, and only one being, at a time. But your friend will always be finite, and God infinite. The friend has his proper being; if you desire to be him completely,

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<sup>34</sup> Catharine Philips, quoted in Cassilly, The Story of Love, 5.

you will possess him completely, and thus his finite being, now identified with your selfless love, will always have its proper relation to God. Put your friend in a light where you desire to have him, and you put a limitation on your soul. You can never really love him.

For to love your friend truly you must love him by desiring good for him as you do for yourself. This is the love of friendship. With the love of concupiscence the object of love is sought for the good of the lover, and not simply for the well-being of the beloved.<sup>35</sup>

What is more, you have so hampered your soul as to be able only to have him, and not to be either him or anything else. But desire to be, and you love with that love which alone is worth the name, and which enables you to fully possess your friend and all the world.<sup>36</sup> This means that a selfless soul is required for great friendship. Man must restrain his desires to have, so that his spirit will be free to be, and thus to possess in the highest degree. Friends, being each other, have no secrets, take each other for granted, without suspicion, without reserve, without doubt. "He lived not but in me." You are never reserved with yourself. For this reason Goodier says that love demands a courage, an unrestraint.

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas Aquinas, Saint, Summa Theologiae, I-II, q.26, a.4c (Marietti edition, Turin, 1950, I, 131.)

<sup>36</sup> Vann, The Heart of Man, 35.



True, it is liable to make mistakes; it may be convicted of much foolishness, of many excesses of generosity. Love does not always calculate, does not always consider pros and cons, is not always prudent... It is dangerous ... but it is the essence of all greatness to face what is dangerous.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, this love must have its exterior manifestations. Only when the manifestation of great love becomes a grasp toward having is the manifestation wrong. If the exterior act reflects the soul's desire to be the friend it is beautiful, and found in all great loves. The less there is of any other thing in the gift, the more room there is within that gift for the giving of self, and for the symbolic possession of the other. Francis Xavier pressed a scrap of paper with Ignatius' name on it to his heart. Edmund Campion, one of the bravest knights in the Church's history, exchanged hats with Father Persons in their last meeting on earth.<sup>38</sup>

Friendship, then, is a most noble type of human love. To reach its ideal requires a depth and intensity to which true humanism urges us. "You are a man; be a man." You are capable of undefinable love. This love is the treasure which you were

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37 Goodier, The School of Love, 141.

38 Cassilly, The Story of Love, 12.

born to possess, but requires a spirit of true love such as all the wealth of the Orient cannot buy. In our ambition to learn more about being fully human--maxime homines--and "to see life steadily and see it whole," we must let the above ideas penetrate our vision of the friendships of The Iliad and The Odyssey. No matter how briefly the matter is treated here, the reader must assimilate the reality proposed, deepening and intensifying it for himself in his own being.

As long as men talk about friendship, they will recall the classic example of Achilles and Patroclus. Achilles, being in the words of Mark Van Doren, "the refined gold of this world's human wealth,"<sup>39</sup> with all his passions is the most savage, the most wrathful, the most loving, the tenderest in feeling, the most beautiful, the most eloquent, the most alive of men. It was this proud spirit that was joined so entirely to the heart of Patroclus that the death of his friend could so mature Achilles as to leave in the world's history the memory not of an uncontrollable youth, but the recollection of a mellow, yet manly love to serve as an example to posterity. In his anger at Agamemnon Achilles declared that he would not fight until the battle reached his own ships. No matter how proximate

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39 Van Doren, The Noble Voice, 36.

the danger he will not relent, and Patroclus uses his armor as a scare to the Trojans. Achilles orders him to drive the Trojans from the fleet, and not to pursue them further. A clue to their close companionship is Achilles' farewell wish. "Would that not a single man of all the Trojans might be left alive, but that we two might be left alone to tear aside the mantle that veils the brow of Troy."<sup>40</sup> The greatest evidence of love is that shown by the effect of Patroclus' death. Even Hector, the defender of Troy, knew of their friendship, and as he stands over the body which his spear is dismissing from this life, pays a pathetic tribute to the friendship of Achilles and Patroclus. "Poor wretch, Achilles with all his bravery availed you nothing."<sup>41</sup> How these words would have cut Achilles deeper than any sword! As it was, Achilles' greatest portion of grief came in that he could not save his comrade; in the hour of need he was not there to help him.<sup>42</sup> Charminglly, the last words of Patroclus assure Hector that Achilles will avenge his death. Homer relates that Venus had never told Achilles "how great a disaster had befallen him in the death of one who was far dearest to him of all his comrades."<sup>43</sup> Achilles himself calls his friend, "he whom I

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40 Iliad xvi.98.

41 Ibid., 837.

42 Ibid., xviii.98.

43 Ibid., xvii.410.

valued more than all others, and loved as dearly as my own life."<sup>44</sup> The life of Patroclus was the life of Achilles. "He lived not but in me." And truly the death of Patroclus was the death of Achilles. For with their great warrior's grief the tide of battle unhesitatingly changed in the favor of the Greeks. The gods and goddesses, the sea nymphs, the warriors and maid servants, all wept for Patroclus. None wept with the utter abandonment with which Achilles wept. No fury was greater than his madness in dragging Hector's body around the walls.<sup>45</sup> A scene which cannot be done justice by any painter is the last farewell of Achilles. The glorious Achilles, now wretched with sorrow, stands over the bier of Patroclus, promising revenge on his slayer. His final words empty that noble heart of all that it is able to say, but much remains unspeakable in the sorrowing heart. "He laid his blood-stained hand on the breast of his friend. 'Fare well,' he cried, 'Patroclus, even in the house of Hades.'"<sup>46</sup> There is no wish which the love of Achilles will not desire for his friend. "Farewell, even in the house of Hades."

Once the intensity of a man's love for one man has

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44 Ibid., xviii.81.

45 Ibid., xxiv.15.

46 Ibid., xxiii.19.

been perceived, we already know that with at least that much depth he can love other men and God. The soul has emptied itself of the act of grasping, and so is in a potency to possess all things. The depth of one friendship in The Iliad and The Odyssey has been seen. We know now to what extent the love of Homer can go.

On the field of battle Glaucus and Diomedes, two gallant knights, were prepared to kill each other until they realized that their fathers had been friends. With this knowledge removing the hatred of war, they immediately exchanged armor, "grasped one another's hands, and plighted friendship."<sup>47</sup> One's armor was golden, worth a hundred head of cattle. The other's was bronze, worth nine head. It was all the same between them. There were no differences.

The joy of seeing an old friend again, remembering the days and years that wound their hearts together, is seen in the underworld where Odysseus and Agamemnon meet. Upon seeing each other Odysseus and Agamemnon wept.<sup>48</sup> Two gigantic men who

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., vi.233.

<sup>48</sup> Odyssey, xi.391.

knew the richness of friendship's wealth! Menelaus informs Telemachus that he mourns for all his old comrades in the Trojan war days, but for Odysseus his love is above all the rest. "Yet for them all I mourn not so much, despite my grief, as for one only, who makes me loathe both sleep and food, when I think of him."<sup>49</sup>

The fundamental idea of union in friendship even has explicit mention in Homer. Remarkably enough, the words are those of Telemachus, the youth from whose years we would not expect such understanding. On his return home from Menelaus' house, Telemachus tells Nestor's son, Peisistratus, that this journey "shall yet more establish us in oneness of heart."<sup>50</sup> Desiring to have Achilles put aside his wrath, Phoenix, a friend of his father appointed to watch for the welfare of Achilles, reveals his affection. "I loved you with all my heart."<sup>51</sup> Even the symbols of one's gift of self to a friend have found a place in the poems of Homer. Such would have to be the case since in the very timeless nature of things they are always appreciable and spontaneous manifestations of one's love.

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49 Ibid., iv.100.

50 Ibid., xv.198.

51 Iliad ix.486.

Iphitus had given him a sharp sword and a mighty spear, "the beginning of loving friendship."<sup>52</sup> Odysseus would never take the bow with him on the ships, or wherever it might be lost or destroyed, but "it lay in his halls at home as a memorial of a dear friend."<sup>53</sup>

Such are a few of the friendships of Homer. They may be the most stirring and the most vibrating, but they are not the only loves. This great soul has shown us the other loves with which the heart of man can be assimilated to the reality about him.

A scene in which many of the species of love can be recognized occurs in the last minutes of The Iliad. There Hecuba, Adromache, and Helen mourn over the corpse of Hector. A tender mother, a loving and helpless wife, and a repentant sinner show their love for the same man. Perhaps the love of Helen strikes the reader the most. For as Henle says, "He had gone out onto the wind-swept plains of Troy... fighting so to speak for her sin, and yet never had she heard an unkind word."

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52 Odyssey xxi.35.

53 Ibid., 38.

As Helen testifies to this gentleness and good will, Henle adds, "Then, despite her sin, does not Helen remind us in some wise of the gracious ladies of the old tales of chivalry?"<sup>54</sup> So is captured some of the heart of two large souls. The same Hector has such a degree of human feeling that while arranging a period of truce with Ajax, he can persuade the latter to comfort the Achaeans, and the two of them together exchange presents as friends. "Let us exchange presents that it may be said, 'They fought with might and main, but they were reconciled and parted in friendship.'"<sup>55</sup> Hector is magnificent; his love is surpassed only by that of Achilles.

There are many more instances of tender affection in Homer, not to be recalled here. The parting of Hector and Andromache has long been famous. It is the scene where the warrior bids his wife goodbye praying for death rather than that he should ever see her carried into slavery. His son is afraid of his father's helmet with the waving plume, and Andromache smiles through her tears at the sight. Hector tosses the babe in his hands praying for a glorious future for him.<sup>56</sup> John A. Scott

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<sup>54</sup> Robert J. Henle, S.J., "Helen, A Lady of Chivalry," The Classical Bulletin, XII, October, 1935, 3.

<sup>55</sup> Iliad vii.301.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., vi.476.



has called this scene "the greatest triumph of Homer's genius."<sup>57</sup> It is one of the most deeply human passages in any language. Also in the line of farewells, Scott calls the departing words of Calypso to Odysseus, "the finest words of parting which I have ever read."<sup>58</sup> After many years of dwelling together in her beautiful cave she has finally lost in her attempt to persuade him to remain with her. She remarks on his determination to be off, and adds, "Yet even so, fare thee well."<sup>59</sup> The beautiful, white-armed Nausicaa who blushing wanted Odysseus for her husband, was quite understandably disappointed when he was about to leave. She expressed her tender regard as they parted, "Farewell, stranger, and hereafter even in thy own native land mayest thou remember me."<sup>60</sup>

One last example of great love in Homer is a scene with enough tragic insight into human life to last a soul a lifetime. It is the "\_\_\_\_\_ " of Achilles, a passage of supreme artistry and supreme power. Priam is moved by the gods

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<sup>57</sup> John A. Scott, "The Parting of Hector and Andromache," The Classical Journal, IX, March, 1914, 274.

<sup>58</sup> John A. Scott, "The Parting of Hector and Andromache," Note 2, The Classical Journal, IX, June, 1914, 395.

<sup>59</sup> Odyssey v.205.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., viii.461.

to go, beg Achilles for the body of his beloved son, Héctor. Nobody thinks that the ruthless Achilles who has so horribly dragged the body with his horses, would ever consent to such a request. But, resolutely, with great sorrow gnawing at his heart, Priam crosses the plain, and goes straight to the tent of Achilles. "And going right up to Achilles he clasped his knees and kissed the dread murderous hands that had slain so many of his warrior sons."<sup>61</sup> A scene in which the horror of war, the tragedies of life, and the love of men, have combined to stir the depths of the human heart. Priam begs Achilles to remember his own father so that he might understand his grief. There, with the lips of Priam pressed to his own bloody hands, the ruthless Achilles begins to weep. He pities his own father and Patroclus, while Priam mourns for Hector. They weep for all the tragedy and sorrow in human life, and Achilles' soul deepens with the bottomless abyss of wisdom. "... God who ordained learning by suffering as the law of life."<sup>62</sup> "There is no pity in the ignorant, the wise man pities and he pays the price in pain, for being wise and pitiful."<sup>63</sup> As they marvel at each

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61 Iliad xxiv.479.

62 Confer Aeschylus, Agamemnon, edited by Gilbert Murray, Oxford, 1937, 177.

63 Euripides, Electra 294.

other, the great Achilles, "the refined gold of this world's human wealth," and the kingly Priam, the human heart finds an indescribable sympathy that comes with the fellowship of great suffering. In portraying the depths to which the human heart can penetrate in union with another human heart, this scene of Achilles and Priam is one of the most profound in literature. That is why this love, and all the others in Homer, will always have something to teach a human being about himself. For if men read Homer as their years of life ebb away, they will constantly bring a clearer insight with them to the reading of The Iliad and The Odyssey, and Homer will send them away with ever increasing richness in this world's only true wealth, the love of an expansive soul.

Homer's love of nature, as has been noted, is a keen and appreciative sense that inspires others to be more aware of the beauty of natural life about them. But these natural beauties are only the background for the story of human love. Homer is most interested in the music of the human heart. The seeds are in every man, but few allow them to grow into the magnanimous love seen in the poems of Homer. Too few allow this love to blossom into the beauty of the love of a true humanist. Homer does not have the foretaste of eternal love with which, in the Christian dispensation, loved ones on earth can hope to

love each other in an unending eternity. But he does show us that the human heart can go far beyond the boundaries to which false prudence, self-seeking, caution, and the fear of danger so often fetter the human spirit. Homer does show us that the reality about us can be ours as the Christian humanist knows it can, not in the grasp of clutching desire--for that is neither possession nor love--but in that possession which is the only true possession, and the most noble perfection of the soul--oneness with the being of the beloved, perfect love. In the reality of Christian humanism this love of human beings, who are an image of the Almighty, is closely allied to the love of the One, True God. It is the difference between possessing the image and the Exemplar, but without a great love for the image which is what the human soul sees for a few short years of life, man cannot have a great love for the Exemplar. For the heart, though, that does possess both the creature and the Creator, has according to its possession a happiness that the days of eternity will not diminish.

## CHAPTER III

### THE RELATION OF MAN TO GOD

A great mistake made by many men eager to bring the thought of God and of religion to men is their fearful preconception that a true meeting or basis of agreement is not to be found. For, as Gerald Vann points out, even if a man admitted no religion, and spurned any supernatural promise, there would always remain in him "that common basis of the love of beauty to which men inevitably cling, that common belief in humanity to which men inevitably hold."<sup>1</sup> Strive as they might to uproot such natural tendency, they can only succeed in stifling the growth of these tendencies with a blanket of materialism. Every man's soul, which was made to possess all of reality in some degree or another, will react to some spark of love in this beautiful world. Once a man has perceived the attractiveness of nature and of men he is only one short step from the presence of God. All of creation cries out to us, "God loves you." All the beauty of this world tells us that there is One above who has

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<sup>1</sup> Vann, On Being Human, 98.

made us like Himself, and in whom all our love of nature and of men will have its final repose. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless till it rest in Thee."<sup>2</sup> And because He has made us in His image we are able to share His mind and His view of reality. But for a mortal being, limited by flesh and blood, and desiring to see in the concrete God's values, the Almighty mercifully sent His Divine Son to show us the way to the possession of all things, to reveal correctly and concretely to us God's loves and God's joys in reality. This revelation balances the scales for the Christian humanist. It gives him the wheel with its hub and four spokes. The Christian humanist has a boundless blessing in the personality of Jesus Christ in his effort "to enrich human experience to the utmost capacity of man."<sup>3</sup>

In the heart of the men and women of The Iliad and The Odyssey there has already been described their love for nature and for man. Their love is stronger and more passionate, fuller and deeper, than the love of the multitude of men today. In this degree they serve as a model for us. But this is not all.

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2 S. Aurelius Augustinus, Confessionum Libri XIII, aucti cura et studio Josephi Capello, Turin, 1948, I, 1. (Translation by the author.)

3 Vann, On Being Human, 11.

Their hearts were so in tune with reality, and so fully did they possess the object of their love, so fully did they become the being of the beloved, that they realized this being was not enough. Only when we do not love a creature completely are we able to be deceived into thinking that a further penetration of this love will satisfy our nature. If we love completely, and possess the object of our love to the full extent of his being, we clearly see the limited relation of that being, great as it is, to all reality. The people of Homer remain restless, and readily predicate their feelings of "the unresting sea." Still, they looked to the gods for an answer to their helplessness. The gods permeated their battles, their journeys, their athletic contests, their good fortune or bad fortune, their life, their marriage, their death. Whether they looked to the gods for completion of their own being, or exactly what place the gods had in their existence, is a point far too debatable and too extensive for our purpose. What is of importance is the fact that in the world of Homer the gods did have their place. It is the office of the Christian humanist to judge the proximity of their view to that of his own.

The world of Homer did not know Jesus Christ. In so far as this meant their values of reality could not be gathered from the example of the Son of God, their vision of the whole

must be incomplete. In so far, then, that they fail to see this important aspect of man's existence they cannot arrive at an accurate estimate of "the worth, dignity, and characteristic perfection of man." But they do show us many ways in which they felt the influence of the gods. The one fundamental note is the superhuman power of the gods.<sup>4</sup> The gods can do to man whatever they will. "Now to one, now to another, Zeus gives good and ill."<sup>5</sup> The fortunes of men are always in the hands of the gods. Victory or defeat, success or prosperity, usually depend more upon the favor of the gods than upon any personal endeavor. "Easy it is for the gods who hold broad heaven, both to glorify a mortal man and to abase him."<sup>6</sup> The quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon was attributed to the will of Zeus. "For so were the counsels of Zeus fulfilled."<sup>7</sup> The anger of Poseidon and Helios Hyperion took life and the return home away from Odysseus' companions, but because of the will of Zeus, Poseidon did not hurl Odysseus to the bottom of the sea. "I did not rob him of his return when once thou hadst promised it."<sup>8</sup> Faced with the

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4 Schoder, "The Sources of Homer's Appeal," 190.

5 Odyssey iv.236.

6 Ibid., xvi.211.

7 Iliad i.5.

8 Odyssey xiii.132.



thought that he had been deceived by Pallas Athene, with his spear rebounding from Achilles' shield, Hector realizes that death is at hand. But such is the decree of heaven. "Death is now exceedingly near at hand and there is no way out of it, for so Zeus and his son Apollo, the far-darter, have willed it."<sup>9</sup> And as Priam kneels before Achilles, the great hearted warrior comforts him with the thought that Hector's death was an evil fortune sent him by Zeus. "The immortals know no care, yet the lot they spin for man is full of sorrow."<sup>10</sup> The Christian humanist believes in a God far more personal. Though He may send sorrow it is only for the purpose of desiring man to seek his ultimate rest in things that are above this earth. The Christian humanist also knows that his God is one who has suffered all that he has, with a human nature like man's. Why he may not know; the fact is beyond controversy. But the Greeks of Homer's stories can teach men to look upward in joy and sorrow, and see that heaven is directing every action of earth.

Even when matters so momentous as life and death are not concerned, the heroes of Greece and Troy are always paying homage to the gods and goddesses, and acknowledging their

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9 Iliad xxi.300.

10 Ibid., xxiv.525.

sovereignty. When welcoming Odysseus, Eumaeus proclaims that "from Zeus are all strangers and beggars."<sup>11</sup> When the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles broke out, Nestor tried to persuade Achilles to recognize their lord as one having power from on high. "And you, Achilles, strive not further with the king, for no man who by the grace of Zeus wields a sceptre has like honor with Agamemnon."<sup>12</sup> At the Scaean gates Hector asks Zeus to give his son great strength like his father.<sup>13</sup> When Phoenix tries to persuade Achilles to leave his wrath he gives a beautiful description of the power of prayer once one has sinned.

For prayers are as daughters to great Zeus; halt, wrinkled, with eyes askance, they follow in the footsteps of sin, who being fierce and fleet of foot, leaves them far behind, and ever baneful to mankind outstrips them even to the ends of the world; but nevertheless the prayers come hobbling and healing after.<sup>14</sup>

Homer's man is also conscious that his qualities of body and soul are gifts of the gods. Pallas Athene gave a courageous modesty to Nausicaa so that she might stand before Odysseus, when the other maidens had fled.<sup>15</sup> So that Odysseus

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11 Odyssey xiv.57.

12 Iliad i.282.

13 Ibid., vi.476

14 Ibid., ix.502

15 Odyssey vi.140.

and his men could guide the stake through the eye of the Cyclops  
 " a god breathed into us great courage."<sup>16</sup> Nestor urges Telemachus to be valiant like his father, and it is at once the prayer of the youth that the gods would clothe him with such strength.<sup>17</sup>

That the gods have care for a religious man in all his actions is clear from Athene's affection for Odysseus. This loving solicitude in all his sufferings admittedly depends on the hero's innate nobility, on his religious attitude cultivated in the past, and determines whether or not the goddess will help Odysseus, and his family for his sake, in all the action essential to The Odyssey.<sup>18</sup>

The interior respect for the gods shows itself in many ways. When addressed the gods are always treated with a reverent tone, and are humbly presented with the pleas of mankind. Zeus is always "Father Zeus," or "Aegis-bearing Zeus," "the mighty son of Cronos," or "Zeus, most great and glorious." The rituals before sacrifice were something to be scrupulously obeyed. Hector refused to offer sacrifice when his hands were stained with the blood of battle.<sup>19</sup> The whole ritual of

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16 Ibid., ix.381.

17 Ibid., iii.208.

18 Charles Homer Giblin, S.J., Odysseus' Fear and Love of the Gods, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois, 1952, 99.

19 Iliad vi.266.

sacrifice is one that impresses the reader with the lively sense of reverence and devotion that the Greeks and Trojans possessed.<sup>20</sup> Father Zamiatra shows the extent to which this dependence and reverence penetrated.

This dependence included all that affected his exterior and interior life, his successes and failures, his happiness and his misery, his existence and his death, even his intimate thoughts and desires.<sup>21</sup>

An entirely different problem which can only be mentioned here is the place of the myths and the morality of the gods, at times hardly edifying. It must be understood that such themes are introduced into the poems more as a relief element, and by way of popular mythology than anything else. There is an essentially opposed difference between Homer's deep reverence for the gods and their place in this mortal life, and these fanciful stories of the gods and goddesses. Homer was too religious a soul to believe sincerely such tales and their implications. One of the most sincere and meaningful lines in all of Homer is the poet's profound declaration, "All men have need of the gods."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., xvi.220.

<sup>21</sup> A.M. Zamiatra, S.J., "Homeric Man's Dependence on the Gods," The Classical Bulletin, XII, February, 1936, 40.

<sup>22</sup> Odyssey 111.48.

As the picture of Homer's humanism is not complete until the relation to the gods has been discovered and lived, so all the more is the position of God the center of life for the Christian humanists. The Greeks feared and revered their gods. The Christian adds to these attitudes the love of which an Almighty God is deserving. For the Greeks Zeus was father. For the Christian God is Father, and His Son is Friend, the Mother of God is Mother. The after-life of the Greeks was Hades; Achilles preferred to be a hireling on earth, rather than lord of all the dead there. Heaven, the place of the face-to-face vision of Almighty God, with the consequent eternal happiness, is the reward for a Christian's life well spent on earth. For the true humanist the love of the creatures of earth in time is but the beginning of their love in eternity. The same love with which the finite limitations of God's essence are loved on earth, will be the love with which the children of God will love and be loved for all eternity, a love purified by the vision of God. The Greeks are doomed to a fatal melancholia. The uplifting spirit of Christian humanism is one of great hope. In these few years on earth the soul of the true humanist expands with his greater and greater possession of nature, his loved ones, and his God, until finally the day comes when this soul with the depth and richness it has acquired on earth, passes ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem, to the full and

complete possession of the One, True God and all His kingdom.

"He whose eye is clear, and such only will understand, may perceive what is this splendid vision that lies just beyond the veil of sense, this object that the heart-sick and weary of earth are born but to find and possess, and which not finding and not possessing, they had better by far have never been born."

Francis Cassilly, S.J.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Mr. James N. Gelson, S.J. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Classics.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

June 11, 1953  
Date

Raymond V. Schoder, Jr.  
Signature of Adviser